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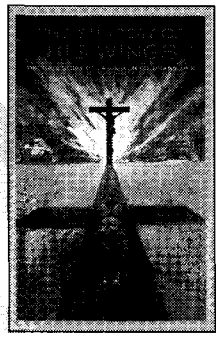

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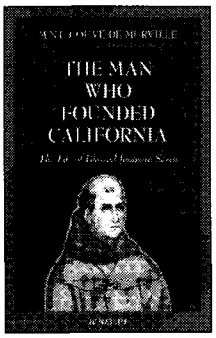

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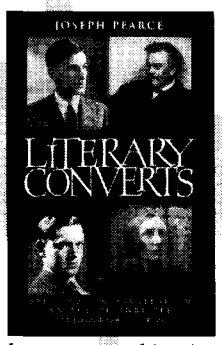

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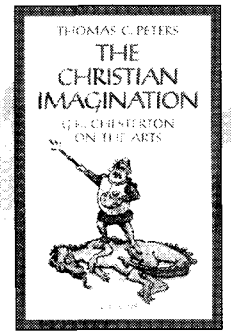

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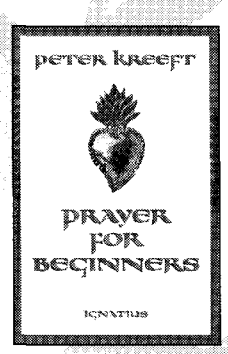

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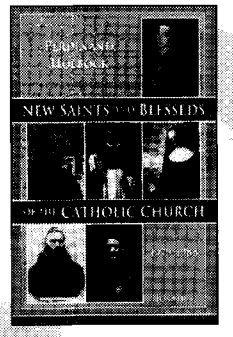

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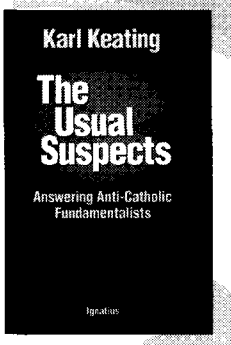

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Are Women Inferior?

It appears that Marie I. George, in "What Aquinas Really Said About Women" (December 1999), agrees with Thomas' belief in females' lesser intelligence relative to males. The concluding sentence says we women "must avoid yielding to impulses of envy, but strive to love whatever littleness we may have due to our sex, as God loves it." Professor George sounds positively Freudian. I think it is good that this brand of Christianity is finally coming out of the closet on the issue. Some organizations have tried to cloud the facts. The Council of Biblical Manhood and Womanhood, for example, while advocating very strict gender roles (which would probably preclude the female author of this article from being a tenured professor), claims that submission does not imply inferiority of intelligence, only of status and priority.

Since Prof. George does not take exception to any of Aquinas' arguments, I will. First, Aquinas says women are inferior in body, intelligence, and soul. Of course women live longer, so physical weakness depends on what type of bodily strength one is talking about. However, the main issue is woman's intelligence. Aquinas claims that since men are called to be authority figures over women (particularly in marriage), males must be more intelligent. In addition, women are "inferior in form."

Lastly, Aquinas must not have thought motherhood requires much intelligence, since it is performed solely by women. This journal and others like it routinely criticize feminists for supposedly saying only stupid women are stay-at-home mothers. Apparently these radical feminists have allies in conservative Christians and Thomas Aquinas.

Tracey Kyckelhahn
Austin, Texas

I had to read Marie I. George's article twice. Surely, I thought, she was joking. Nope. She meant it. She closes her article by saying: "God wants inequalities in rational beings, and if we love God, we should conform our will to His."

St. Paul thought women were inferior; Aristotle thought women were the "imperfect" principle in reproduction; and St. Thomas Aquinas "took female intellectual inferiority to be plain enough from experience." And Marie George feels we can learn something about God from this.

I'm sorry, Professor George. What I learn from this is simple: Aristotle and Paul and Thomas—they were all wrong! Flat out. Don't make excuses for them. They were male chauvinistic creatures of their day. (Yes, even St. Paul.) All three were brilliant in other areas, but when it comes to women, they flunk.

Women are not—de facto—inferior. Count on it. (Ask my wife!)

Bill Cummings
Forsyth, Georgia

Marie I. George replies:

Aquinas maintains that women taken as a group are less intelligent than men. One cannot logically infer from this that he necessarily thinks that being a good mother requires but little intelligence. And in fact he never maintains that women or mothers are dumb.

I do not know exactly what Tracey Kyckelhahn means when she says that my exposition of Aquinas sounds Freudian. I do know that one of the female doctors of the Catholic Church expresses the same view as Aquinas concerning the inequality of creatures (the quotation might also be of interest to Bill Cummings):

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> For a long time I asked myself why the good Lord had preferences, why all souls did not receive an equal degree of graces. . . . Jesus deigned to instruct me about this mystery. He put before my eyes the book of nature and I understood that all the flowers that he created are beautiful, and that the éclat of the rose and the whiteness of the lily did not detract from the perfume of the little violet and the ravishing simplicity of the daisy. . . . I understood that if all the little flowers wanted to be roses, nature would lose its spring adornment, and the fields would no longer be dotted with little flowers. . . . So also is it in the world of souls that is the garden of Jesus. He wanted to create great saints who could be compared to lilies and to roses; but he also created smaller ones who should be content to be daisies or violets destined to rejoice the good Lord when He lowers his gaze towards His feet. Perfection consists in doing His will, to be what He wants us to be (St. Thérèse of Lisieux, *Manuscrits autobiographiques*, Introduction).

The World of Harry Potter

Kudos to Alan Jacobs on his fine analysis of the Harry Potter books and phenomenon ("Harry Potter's Magic," January). His discussion of magic versus science, and the observation that they were originally much closer in concept and were both attempts to control our environment is, to my mind, spot on. I would question only his observation that Rowling resembles J. R. R. Tolkien as a literary artist.

A resemblance, perhaps. But the chasm between their skill is vast. Tolkien's achievement almost beggars description, and I've long thought that as much loved as he is today, it will be a long time before the enormity of his accomplishment is fully appreciated. Rowling tells an excellent story—a prime requisite for a successful author—and has that indefinable and unpredictable ability to captivate readers both young and old. But her inventions in her secondary world cannot compare to Tolkien's, who begins with a creation story (the beautiful "Ainulindale" of *The Silmarillion*), and then proceeds to people his creation with beings of different kinds, entire languages, an entire geography, detailed histories, and on and on.

The invention in Rowling cannot compare with this. Here is, for me at any rate, the acid test. I would and do reread Tolkien again and again. I have not, and almost certainly will not, reread Rowling.

Philip B. Rose
Department of Mathematics
Carroll College
Helena, Montana

Everything positive that Alan Jacobs said in his review of the Harry Potter series was true, but I'm surprised he missed the main problem.

He posits that, historically, magic and science were parallel efforts to control the physical realm, the correct answer becoming apparent only in retrospect. An interesting point, but one that relies heavily on a discussion of medieval alchemy, not what most modern young readers are likely to think of when they read "magic"—precisely because alchemy (in the benign sense of a nonscientific process that did not involve the summoning of supernatural forces) did not work.

In dismissing the Christian objections to the series, Professor Jacobs fails to engage the view of magic repeatedly expressed in the Bible, that there are two, and only two, sources of supernatural (i.e., nonscientific) power: God and demons. "Magic" is the word used to describe supernatural power that does *not* come from God—if it is of God we call it a "miracle." Ancient texts indicate that magic was performed by invoking the secret personal name of the god: even in the Bible, no miracle (except creation) occurs before God reveals His personal name ("I Am Who I Am") to Moses. Thus Rowling's unpronounceable incantations would be, in ancient terms, (partly) the secret name of a god (or demon).

There is also the purpose for which supernatural forces are used: it is interesting to contrast Jesus' temptations in the desert to use the supernatural for personal purposes with the world of magic that Rowling creates. Jesus rejected Satan's suggestion to create food; Rowling (apparently) has *all* food created through magic—and dishes are washed by magic too! Jesus declined

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the opportunity to fly (by jumping off the Temple and being borne up by angels); Rowling's witches and wizards fly on brooms for sport. Jesus would not have created self-shuffling cards. In Rowling's world, the supernatural is used for both good and evil to be sure, but mostly it is used for personal convenience and pleasure.

When I read the first two books to my children, I realized that they created in me a strong desire to go to Hogwarts School of Magic—not to glorify God and further His ends, but rather to make supernatural power my own for my own gratification. The original sin was committed for the motive of wanting to become like a god.

Brock Fowler
Rockville, Maryland

Alan Jacobs' review of the Harry Potter stories attempts to reassure wary Christian readers that, despite the potentially serious concerns about the central role of witchcraft in the stories, the adventures of Harry Potter are really just good fun. While Professor Jacobs makes a number of valid points, I must say that I am not entirely reassured by his argument. I agree that Joanne Rowling has crafted an entertaining story that addresses real (if somewhat fantastically presented) moral choices. I further agree that the presentation of witchcraft in the story is far from sinister. In contrast to Prof. Jacobs, however, I believe that the books still raise significant issues of concern for Christian parents—not because of a glorification of witchcraft but because of a glorification of elitism that is fundamentally in opposition to the Christian worldview.

In the Harry Potter stories, Rowling has not, as Prof. Jacobs suggests, created a fantasy world with its own rules and history, but rather *embedded* a fantasy world in our own world. The real world, the world in which we all actually live and make choices, is the world of the "Muggles" that coexists with the world of the wizards. Rowling presents Muggles in the most negative possible light. Harry's Muggle relatives (the Dursleys) are oafish, cruel, stupid, and so completely devoid of human compassion that they are easily dismissed as pathetic and irrelevant. In contrast, Rowling's wizard characters exhibit the full range of human personalities from good to evil, simple to complex, humble to proud, wise to foolish. Readers naturally identify with Harry and with the wizard-world, not because wizards represent anything particularly virtuous, but because they are depicted as the "real people" against which the Dursleys of the Muggle-world can only be seen as two-dimensional and unpleasant caricatures. Rowling also presents the wizard-world as a far more interesting place than that of ordinary Muggles. Wizards have magic. They can do things that the Muggles cannot understand or accept. Muggles fear magic, even good magic, because they are too stupid and small-minded to understand wizard ways.

The idea of a secret world of magic appeals to our sense of status and distinction. We all long, in some way, to be part of an elite group. This longing is particularly strong for children, who often revel in the notion that they are so special they cannot possibly be understood by anyone—least of all by their Muggle parents. While separating people into Muggles and wizards is a well-trodden path in the human psyche, it is a path that is fraught with the risk of elitism. One can almost hear the condescending wizardly sniff that "Muggles are simply not *our* kind of people."

M. L. Condic
Salt Lake City, Utah

Alan Jacobs replies:
My thanks to Philip B. Rose for his compliments, but I would have him note that I did not compare Rowling to Tolkien in terms of aesthetic

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(or moral) excellence; I merely noted a likeness in imaginative purpose.

I cannot think of an appropriate reply to Brock Fowler's letter. I suppose I could point out that what he calls "Rowling's unpronounceable incantations" are in fact readily pronounceable Latin, or Latin-derived, words ("Expelliarmus," "Lumos") and are mere grammatical imperatives, rather than the secret names of demons; but perhaps that would not address his main point. Let me confine myself to saying that Mr. Fowler's censures are driven by an underlying principle—i.e., what Jesus did not do must not be represented positively in books—that would cause us to repudiate not only Joanne Rowling's books, but the entire literature of fantasy (including of course Tolkien), and perhaps literary fiction tout court. Indeed, I'm not sure whether any of the arts would easily survive so fierce a stricture. However, the proposition that "Jesus would not have created self-shuffling [playing] cards" surely calls for serious theological debate.

M. L. Condic writes that "One can almost hear the condescending wizardly sniff that 'Muggles are simply not *our* kind of people.'" I would amend that sentence by striking the "almost," since one hears that idea quite clearly expressed in the Harry Potter books—but not by Harry or by Joanne Rowling. Instead, those are the very sentiments expressed by the loathsome Draco Malfoy (translation: "Dragon Bad-Faith"), Harry's nemesis, and by Malfoy's father. Both of them regularly proclaim their contempt for Muggles and for wizards descended from Muggles, including Harry's friend Hermione Granger (whose parents are thoroughly unmagical dentists) and Harry himself (whose mother's parents were Muggles). Far from encouraging elitism, Rowling strongly condemns it by associating it with some of the nastiest characters in her books.

The Pope and the Jews

Having read William D. Rubinstein's brilliant work *The Myth of Rescue*, I couldn't wait to read his review of John Cornwell's *Hitler's Pope* (January). I was not disappointed: unlike most other reviewers of Cornwell, Professor Rubinstein knows fact from fiction and doesn't hesitate to detail Cornwell's errors. Though some might think it harsh to label the book a "malign exercise in defamation and character assassination," this is really an understatement.

In the fall of 1999, when *Hitler's Pope* came out, all we heard was that Cornwell was a "devout Catholic." Yet on the book jacket of Cornwell's *The Hiding Places of God*, published in 1991, he was touted as "a lapsed Catholic." Indeed, on page twenty-six of this book, Cornwell writes how he has become "increasingly convinced that human beings were morally, psychologically, and materially better off without a belief in God." But the clincher is this: "As I entered middle age nothing short of a miracle could have shaken these firm convictions."

If Cornwell is to be believed, then he experienced a miracle in the mid-nineties and never told a soul about this momentous event. Either that or he is a pathological liar who hates the papacy and is hell-bent on destroying the honorable legacy of Pope Pius XII.

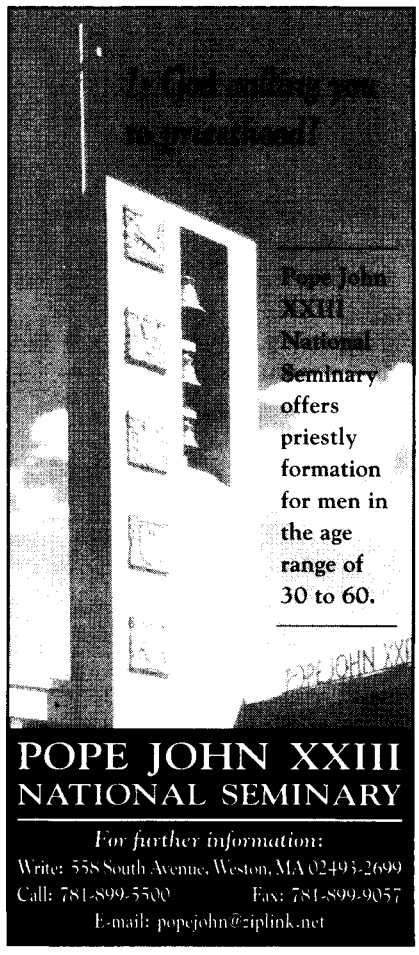
William A. Donohue
Catholic League
New York, New York

I am glad Professor William D. Rubinstein challenges some stereotypes concerning Catholics and Jews in his review of John Cornwell's *Hitler's Pope*. He does, however, perpetuate some others by stating that Poland was a land of "intense anti-Semitism."

The alleged intensity of anti-Semitism in Poland had much to do with the logic of numbers. In prewar Poland, one in ten citizens was Jewish (3.1 million Jews in a population of 32 million). In Belgium and Holland (two countries that Rubenstein mentions), there was one Jew per ninety-three inhabitants (Belgium) or one Jew per seventy inhabitants (Holland).

The comparative density of the Jewish population in Poland created incomparably more opportunities for conflict, for Jewish bitterness, and for Catholic bitterness as well. Additionally, it was much easier to protect one citizen out of seventy or ninety-three than it was to shelter one out of ten.

It should also be remembered that the Holocaust began after two full years of World War II on the Eastern front. In Poland dur-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ing those early years it was not Jews but Catholics who were the target of Nazi *and* Soviet murderous policies.

Ewa M. Thompson
Department of Slavic Studies
Rice University
Houston, Texas

William D. Rubinstein's review of John Cornwell's *Hitler's Pope* is more polemic than it is review. Cornwell's work is characterized as a "malign exercise in defamation and character assassination." Further, as an academic expert in modern history, Rubinstein finds that Cornwell "misread and misunderstood Pacelli's actions." But for a reviewer with a Jewish-sounding name who cites "authorities" who disagree with Cornwell, a Catholic critic of the Church, this is disingenuous. It is one thing to argue that the Pope had defenders. This fact does not per se make the defenders or the critics correct. (Pinchas Lapide, for example, is an idiosyncratic, ideologically driven scholar.) A full assessment of the Church's role in the Holocaust can take place only after a full disclosure of the relevant evidence, and the Church has failed to make such a disclosure.

(Rabbi) Alan J. Yuter
Congregation Israel
Springfield, New Jersey

William D. Rubinstein replies:
Given the controversial nature of this subject, I am not surprised at the range of responses. I agree with much that Professor Ewa M.Thompson says. Polish anti-Semitism (and all other forms) is an extremely complicated subject. As she suggests, it is often viewed in a narrow way that acts as a barrier to understanding. Poles (along with others in Central and Eastern Europe) regarded Jews as comprising a grossly disproportionate share of the economic and professional elites of their backward country, and as being disproportionately involved in radical and modernist political and cultural movements. This perception was, almost certainly, the main reason for the endemic nature of hostility to the Jews in inter-war Eastern Europe, so often described as the "zone of anti-Semitism." As all Zionist theorists of the time readily admitted, this critique contained a major element of truth whose enunciation, post-Holocaust, has become virtually taboo. However much the Jewish situation was unique, this form of anti-Semitism was strikingly similar to other forms of hostility to "entrepreneurial minorities" in societies where there are no Jews—for instance the treatment of Indians in East Africa in the 1970s or of the Chinese in Malaysia and Indonesia today. Jewish population statistics do coincide, albeit loosely, with the amount and virulence of anti-Semitism in the inter-war period, although cultural and economic factors were in my view more important.

I agree with Rabbi Alan J. Yuter that the Vatican should make available all of its documents relating to the Holocaust, and that its secrecy has been counterproductive to its own interests. Nevertheless, the salient and central point—whether it would have been realistically possible, by pursuing a different strategy, for Pius XII or the Catholic Church to have saved more Jews from the Nazi death machine—does not depend on the release of new documents. My contention was that the Vatican's policies may well have saved as many Jews as it was possible to have done, and that a radically different policy might well have cost more Jewish lives. I fail to see what having a "Jewish-sounding name" has to do with the accuracy of this contention.

I am grateful to William A. Donohue for his kind remarks. Cornwell has obviously trawled the archives for everything and anything negative he could find on Pacelli, with little or no balance, and "character assassination" is not too strong a term for the result. To reiterate a point I made in my review, Cornwell has virtually nothing to say, for instance, on Pacelli's championing of the Christian Democratic movement in post-1945 Europe. Strangely for "Hitler's Pope," this was the first mass conservative political movement in the history of continental Europe to be totally committed to democracy and to lack any hint whatever of authoritarianism, ultra-nationalism, or anti-Semitism.

Millennial Hope

The Millennium Symposium, "What Can We Reasonably Hope For?" (January), made for instructive reading. So, too, did Richard John Neuhaus' "American History and Theological Nerve," the brief Public Square article in the same issue.

DC

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Father Neuhaus' article touched on an issue that was largely missing from the symposium: postmillennial theology.

Fr. Neuhaus noted that postmillennial expectations (and chutzpah?) played a major part in the early and middle years of American history. He also noted that postmillennial expectations, somewhat like Christianity itself, have receded dramatically in recent decades. This was clear in the Symposium, where only one participant touched upon a potential place for postmillennial thought.

Peter J. Leithart wrote that "surely good things can come from Kenya and South Korea." Exactly. In fact, one might well add China. Twenty years, fifty years, a century from now, more Christians will speak Chinese than English. It may already be so.

The work of the Holy Spirit throughout history is dedicated to bringing the blessings of Christian thought and life to the nations. Not just to the Western Church. And not just to, or through, the United States. The Holy Spirit may well discard the U.S., like a spent arrow, in the conflict of the ages.

We should not be so worldly minded as to think that in the new millennium the Holy Spirit will do little, and that not well. Quite the contrary. We should expect God to continue to move mountains (if slowly) to bring glory to His Son. That is postmillennial theology, in a nutshell.

Warren Ted Hinds
Maysville, Georgia

I was disappointed that none of the participants in the Millennium Symposium made clear the first thing every Christian can hope for—the everlasting nature of the gospel promises! "Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words will not pass away" (Mark 13:31). "Behold, I am with you even to the end of the world" (Matthew 28:20). The gospel message is, was, and will be the first thing we who are called to follow Christ can "reasonably hope for." All else, all gloomy prognostications, all church reformation, all political orders, takes second place—amounting to little more than the temporal clothes the Bride may have to wear before her wedding. Our Bridegroom, we may be sure, will provide us appropriate garments in due season.

Jan Peter Dembinski
North Pomfret, Vermont

Unfair Review

Your unsigned review of my book, *Shows About Nothing: Nihilism in Popular Culture from The Exorcist to Seinfeld* (Spence, 1999), seems to have been based on a brief perusal of the introduction and the table of contents (Briefly Noted, December 1999). While the review claims that the book is too short to establish its conclusion, it seems to have been much too long a read for the attention span of the reviewer. Furthermore, I do not hold the position, falsely attributed to me by the reviewer, that nihilism arises from "liberal democracy" but rather from a certain form of liberal democracy. I could elaborate on this and other points but I already did that—in the book.

Thomas Hibbs
Department of Philosophy
Boston College

The Mystery of Being

As an unrepentant dualist, I think Richard John Neuhaus' understandable exuberance in the face of Being's awesome mystery has carried him a bit far in his hypothesized equating of Spirit and Matter ("Science, Matter, Spirit, and Three-Card Monte," January). The thought of a metaphysical "bridge too far" comes to mind.

The bottom line is that all material things, whether Bishop Berkeley refuting stones or quantum fluctuations, are characterized by the strictly limited intelligibility of entities that are only parts of the "Fullness of Being." In short, "A" can't be both "A" and "B" at the same time unless we're prepared to surrender the principle of noncontradiction and thereby legitimate newer versions of the game that substitute "blobs of tissue" for pre-born children.

It's only because we have a nonmaterial or spiritual component, enabling us to somehow simultaneously become, in the act of knowing, both a stone as well as a blade of grass, that we can distinguish between them, as well as choose life over death in the really high stakes games that increasingly confront us.

Thomas J. Kleist
Wauwatosa, Wisconsin

Is America Pro-Choice?

Richard John Neuhaus notes (While We're At It, January) a recent *USA Today*/Gallup poll reportedly showing that pro-choicers have declined to 48 percent. How, then, to explain why Maine voters turned out in record numbers last November 2 to defeat by 55 to 45 percent an initiative aimed at outlawing "partial-birth" abortions? The explanation, I think, is that whatever diverse opinions Americans hold about abortion under various circumstances, when push comes to shove most would rather have individual women, rather than government, making decisions regarding problem pregnancies.

Edd Doerr
Americans for Religious Liberty
Kansas City, Missouri

Fair Play for Witches

I have just read the item regarding Witches/Wiccans in the U.S. Army (While We're At It, January).

While I have no problem with Richard John Neuhaus failing to see eye-to-eye with the Pagan community on theological issues, there were some things reported in the

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article that simply aren't true. I am quite sure that Father Neuhaus was not intentionally spreading lies about another faith. If he had his facts straight about the Wiccan faith, and still disagreed with it/us, I would not be concerned. However, I feel it is imperative to correct the misconceptions he has about some things, so that further errors are not presented as fact to your readers.

Yes, Wicca (or Witchcraft, if you prefer), is now a nationally recognized religion. It is an earth-based faith, very similar to the Native American belief system, which honors the cycles of the seasons reflected in ourselves and the world around us. It teaches respect for oneself and others, spiritual growth, and tolerance. Pagans believe that there is no one "right" way to achieve spiritual enlightenment, or find a personal connection to the Creator—all people must find the path that speaks to their heart. Therefore, we do not seek to convert others to our faith, as we don't believe in proselytizing. Cults usually have a very strong focus on converting others and keeping them "in the fold," so to speak. We do neither. Anyone who chooses to become a practicing Wiccan may do so, and those who find that this faith is not for them may leave and seek enlightenment elsewhere.

Heather Fairfield
Canton, Massachusetts

Who's Responsible for Hell?

It doesn't seem to me that Richard John Neuhaus is making much of an effort to understand what might be motivating Dr. R. Albert Mohler's displeasure with the papal statement concerning responsibility for eternal damnation (While We're At It, January). He even seems to be accusing Dr. Mohler of charging God Himself with evil. The gravity with which he warns Dr. Mohler to retract his remarks indicates as much. But it seems to me that nothing could have been further from Dr. Mohler's mind.

Isn't there a confusion here over what sort of responsibility one has in mind when one says that God is responsible for the eternal damnation of some human beings? If we are thinking of moral culpability when we say "responsible," then of course God is in no way responsible for anyone's damnation, and I feel sure that Dr. Mohler would agree with this. But if we mean merely that God is in some sense active in this process, then it doesn't seem problematic at all to say that He is responsible. A useful analogy can be made here to the case in which someone is jailed by the State. Moral responsibility rests entirely with the offending individual, but the State is active in sending the individual to jail, and it is reasonable to say that the State is in some sense responsible for the incarceration of that individual.

John T. Mullen
South Bend, Indiana

RJN replies:
The "gravity" of my admonition to Dr. R. Albert Mohler in response to his ludicrously hyperbolic assertion that statements of John Paul II "reverse nearly two thousand years of Christian teaching" was, at least partly, tongue in cheek. I assume that Dr. Mohler, along with all orthodox Christians, knows that God is not at fault for the damnation of anyone.

Correction

Oops. Eric Chevlen's poem in the February issue was mistakenly titled "Marriage Anagram." It is not an anagram but an acrostic. The mistake was ours, and we apologize to readers who spent the past month trying to put the 403 letters of the poem into a new order.

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THIS TIME

Forgiveness & the Death Penalty

James Nuechterlein

On February 24, the State of Texas executed Betty Lou Beets, age sixty-two, for the murder of her husband in 1985. Ordinarily, the death of Ms. Beets by lethal injection would not have drawn particular attention. The death penalty is now common in the U.S., especially in Texas, where Ms. Beets' execution was the 121st in only the five years that George W. Bush has been Governor.

The case got the publicity it did for a number of reasons. Few women receive the death penalty (Ms. Beets is the fourth, and the second in Texas, since the U.S. Supreme Court reinstated capital punishment in 1976). In addition, a number of women's groups took up the case because Ms. Beets was allegedly beaten by her husband. Most notably, of course, Gov. Bush, who refused to grant her a stay of execution, is currently running for President, and a number of critics saw his failure to intercede as a contradiction of the "compassionate conservatism" that is the theme of his campaign.

Her gender aside—she was regularly identified in the media as a grandmother—Ms. Beets is an unlikely poster-person for opponents of capital punishment. Of her five husbands, she shot three of them, the fourth and the fifth fatally (the second recovered from a stomach wound). She was convicted only of the murder of her last spouse, but the penultimate one was found buried next to him in her front yard. Both had been shot in the back of the head. Even if one grants the charges of domestic abuse (her defenders raised the claim, years after her trial, that she was beaten not only by all her husbands but by her father as well), hers is, on its face, a less than fully sympathetic case. It seems obvious, then, that Ms. Beets' execution received the limited notoriety it did mainly because of Gov. Bush's involvement.

Of the criticisms occasioned by the Governor's (non)action, none is more peculiar than that of James Wood, Senior Editor of the *New Republic* ("Playing God," *TNR*, February 21). Wood, it is true, does not refer specifically to the Beets case, but his ferocious attack on Bush's overall record on the death penalty obviously includes her case in its purview. In brief, Wood argues that Bush's attitude toward the death penalty not only makes of his claim to be pro-life "an affront to language and morality," but brings into question his professed Christian commitment. What really ought to be called into question is Wood's ability to construct, on this issue at least, a coherent argument.

To begin with, Wood is shaky on the facts of the situation. He grandly claims that Bush "has life-and-death command of the inmates on Texas' death row." Bush, he says, "has executed [121] people in his five-year tenure, more than a sixth of all the Americans executed since 1976. In one week in 1997, the pro-life Governor had four prisoners put to death; in January of this year, he polished off another seven." Wood's reckless rhetoric obscures how Texas law works.

The Governor of the state "polishes off" no one. As Wood finally admits (without noting the contradiction to his argument), "the Texas Board of Pardons and Paroles decides each case." The Governor has pardoning powers, but he has no authority on his own to commute death sentences to life imprisonment. He can do so only on the Board's recommendation. The most he can do otherwise is issue a thirty-day stay of execution. (Bush did not do so in the Beets case, he said, because he was convinced of her guilt and because she had already, in the fifteen years since her conviction, exhausted her appeals. It is difficult to know what a thirty-day appeal could have achieved. As Bruce Buchanan, a professor of political science at the University of Texas, noted, "If he had given her that thirty days, then he could be seen as pandering.")

Doubly peculiar is Wood's theological argument. In the first place, Wood is not, by his own repeated insistence in the *New Republic* and elsewhere, a Christian. He was reared in a conservative Christian home, and has apparently been rebelling against that traumatic experience ever since. In any case, he writes regularly, and vehemently, of his categorical disagreement with Christian orthodoxy. Yet he does not hesitate to lecture Gov. Bush on his duties as a Christian. That circumstance does not in itself invalidate Wood's argument—the provenance of an argument does not determine its correctness—but it does make it more than a little odd.

What invalidates Wood's case is its substance. The heart of Christian piety, Wood (correctly) insists, is love and forgiveness. From that starting point he

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concludes that a Christian pro-life position must not stop at abortion but must entail as well opposition to capital punishment. It follows, therefore, that Gov. Bush's refusal to pardon condemned murderers contradicts the Christian's necessary devotion to "forgiveness, forgiveness, forgiveness."

One wonders if Wood's ignorance of the Christian tradition is as great as his argument suggests. Throughout Christian history, the overwhelming testimony of church teaching—Catholic, Orthodox, and Protestant—has affirmed the compatibility of support for capital punishment with orthodox belief and practice. It is the case that in relatively recent times questions have been raised within Christian circles concerning the death penalty, but it is simply incorrect to maintain, as Wood does, that for believers the duty to forgive cannot coexist with support for capital punishment.

Indeed, the logic (so to speak) of Wood's argument would prohibit not just penalties of death but punishment of any kind. There is nothing in the structure of his argument that stops at the execution block. If forgiveness of sin means, as Wood seems to say, that there can be no social punishment for sin, then Christians should have nothing to do with criminal sanctions of any sort. One imagines a Wood-instructed Christian judge, recalling Jesus' mandate to forgive seventy times seven, not merely sending convicted murderers back onto the street but emptying prisons wholesale.

Wood himself shows fleeting awareness that he has argued himself into a corner. Toward the very end of his piece, he lamely concedes that "personal forgiveness of sins is somewhat different from the due process of the state." (Somewhat different, indeed.) But it's too late for him to back down, and he promptly, if feebly, goes back on the attack. Jesus required of his followers "be ye therefore perfect," Wood reminds us, and he woozily concludes that Bush's "hardheartedness" on capital punishment "is far from perfect." On that inglorious note, he gives up, as it were, the ghost of his argument.

This is not the place for an extended discussion of how Christians today should think about the death penalty (see my "An Unwonted Uncertainty," FT, April 1998). There are far more cogent arguments than Wood musters for opposing capital punishment. But his essay is by no means untypical of its genre, and its lack of seriousness reminds us that as a society turns against the death penalty, it may become not so much more humane as more sentimental.

In thinking about what it means to be pro-life, Christians must, to begin with, distinguish between protecting innocent life and protecting society against murderers. People incapable of making so elementary a distinction have no place in determining where the argument goes from there. FT

Chowkiakow: The River

(September 1926)

On the day of the Chowkiakow raid
an evangelist left down river
escorting three girls for the school there
but heard before arrival so stayed on board

After five days the brigands boarded
but the girls hid in the boat bottom
under straw like Jericho spies
& escaped

Our evangelist father of one girl
was taken We're afraid he was killed
for a body was found near there
looking (the people say) like an evangelist

D. S. Martin

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Opinion

My History and America's

Wilfred M. McClay

The National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH), in partnership with the White House Millennium Council, announced in 1999 a "millennium project" entitled "My History Is America's History." The project's literature enjoins us to "follow your family's story and you will discover America's history." Its website offers a link called "Welcome to Our Front Porch," a place "where you can exchange family stories, explore the nation's past, and make your story part of the American heritage we all share." The section called "Exchange Family Stories" juxtaposes "your favorite family story" with "America's stories." The link "Find Your Place in History" features a history timeline, history files (entries from contributing partner Houghton Mifflin's popular reference book *The Reader's Companion to American History*), and a "history roundtable," yet to be set up at the time of this writing. There is even a link for "Saving Your Family Treasures." What used to be disparaged as mere genealogy is now being accorded the full status of "history."

Now, of all the good reasons one studies American history, surely one of the most compelling is the fact that it is one's own. In saying this, I momentarily presume that most of my readers are Americans. But the principle involved is universal in character. To understand the history of one's own country, even when one feels oneself to be more or less detached from it—and even if one is in rebellion against it—is to gain insight into who one is, and into basic elements of one's makeup. Such insight serves to frame and amplify our own experience, in much the same way that our perception of our own city or town is transformed when we have absorbed and internalized the history of that place's streets and buildings and neighborhoods. Then even the most routine street scenes reverberate in our awareness with invisible meanings, intimations, and half-buried moods that flicker back and forth, again and again, between what we see and what we know and what we remember. Historical consciousness discloses to us the strains of a distant, pervasive music that is inaudible to those who live merely in the present.

In the presence of great historical sites, such as the Gettysburg or Antietam battlefields, such awareness takes an even deeper hold of our imaginations and emotions. It is like the sweet melancholy of a solo violin, whose haunting voice pierces us, through all the layers of rationality, with the keen edge of loss. There is a continuity of sorts between such profound emotions and the mingled thoughts and feelings that arise in us when we revisit one of the long-forgotten places of our childhood, or mark the gravestone of someone precious whom we have lost. Man is in love, said Yeats, and loves what vanishes. Such is the painful beauty of historical awareness. Our efforts to connect with the vanished past do not necessarily make us happier in any simple sense. But they make us more fully human and more fully at home in the world, in time as well as space.

Historical study can also unlock the hidden sources of certain ideas, dispositions, and habits in us by showing us their rootedness in people and events that came before us. In fact, it is not at all farfetched to understand historical study as bearing a certain resemblance to psychoanalysis in this respect, since both are enterprises intent upon excavating and bringing to conscious awareness the knowledge of consequential antecedents. Indeed, the analogy to individual psychology goes even deeper than that. There comes a point in our personal development when an awareness dawns on us, not only of how profoundly we have been shaped by our own parents and milieu, but just as importantly, of how our parents have been shaped by *their* own parents and milieus, which have in turn been shaped by an even earlier set of parents and milieus, and so on. Once our reflections are set into motion along these lines, our minds crabwalk backward in thought, moving generation by generation along the genealogical path until the path begins mysteriously to peter out and finally disappears into the mists. This too is a lesson in historical awareness.

Such an intensely personal approach to history—as a subject that tells us about *ourselves*—is more and more popular in our very psychological age. It is common these days for high school and college teachers to get their students interested in history by asking them to interview their grandparents or (if they have them) great-grandparents, and ask those elders about their own earlier times, and their own experiences and observations. The point is to help students feel personally connected to the abstractions of the past through someone they know—and it does that won-

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derfully well. It can serve especially well as a way of giving life to the great American story of immigration, or to the rigors of the Great Depression, or to the now remote experiences of the Second World War. Indeed, something of the sort is essential from time to time, to keep historical study from becoming too bloodless and abstract, too removed from experience. For African Americans and other racial and ethnic minorities, it is especially encouraging and stimulating to discover that American history includes *their* lives, and not merely the lives of elite political, business, and military leaders. But they are hardly alone in this need. It is something we all share, and perhaps increasingly so.

Hence the millennium project of the NEH. As I have suggested, there is much to be said for the general proposition of personalizing history. But this particular way of going about it is deeply troubling, and clearly reveals what are also the weaknesses of such an approach. Let us leave aside for the moment the rather immediate question of whether the NEH should even be doing such things in the first place, and ask a different question: can it really be true that "my history is America's history"? Or, to put it another way, isn't such an assertion a very, very different matter from saying that "America's history is my history"? The experience of visiting Gettysburg is an example of the latter. Such a visit elevates and charges our individual experience by infusing the general meaning of the larger into the particular texture of the smaller—"America" into "me." But what could it possibly mean to go in the other direction—from the droplet to the ocean, as it were—and assert that "my family story" is "the American story"? Is this not really a sentimental delusion, a sop to our vanity, and an appeal to our colossal narcissism, on a par with those annoying bumper stickers that boast, "I Can Save the Earth"?

Perhaps so, perhaps not. It will be interesting to see how, and if, the project develops. At the outset, though, one can say that it has a distinctly Clintonian air about it, with its feel-good faux-folksiness, its unthreatening bite-sized quality, its easy conflation of the village and the nation—its website is billed as "a virtual front porch for every American"—and its smarmy presumption that, just as it is now the national government's proper business to promote school uniforms and inveigh against "social promotion," so it is now the Feds' business to make sure that Americans record their family stories and hang onto their family photographs. Aside from the nannying overtones of such a presumption, there is something incongruous about the idea that people who have the skills and wherewithal to find their way around an Internet website still need help in preserving their family heirlooms. By the same token, it seems absurdly obvious that families lacking the cohesion needed to preserve their own memories will have very few memories worth preserving. And when the website assures us that "'My History' will weave a powerful tapestry of America that illustrates our nation's history and culture," one wants to ask, exactly how is this going to happen? Will the stories weave themselves?

The millennium project is, then, a useful touchstone, which reminds us that there are inherent limits to the personalization of history, and inherent gaps between our own stories and those of the nation and the world. There is nothing wrong with collecting family stories, but no one should be under the illusion that these can magically transform themselves into history. History can and should be a vehicle for the exploration of our self-consciousness. But it should also serve constantly to interrupt the monologue of our self-awareness. It has to do *both* of these things, and it is not quite doing its job when it fails to do one or the other.

The study of history is not only about familiarization but also defamiliarization; not only about knowledge of ourselves, but also knowledge of that which is *other* than ourselves. That is why we should not study only American history, or only modern history, or only Western history. That, too, is why it is so profoundly misleading to say that "my history is America's history," and why the faulty premise behind that statement is such a pernicious one. We have to reject the essentially narcissistic idea that history is valueless unless it reflects our own image back to us. On the contrary: one of the principal uses of the truly usable past lies in its intransigence and otherness, its insistence upon the large structures in which our lives are embedded, its stubborn resistance to our sentiments, its unwillingness to oblige our narcissism—its haunting reminder, through its record of landscapes littered with shattered monuments to forgotten Ozymandiases, of our mortality and our ultimate insignificance.

The problem is no doubt complicated by the fact that we Americans have, in some measure, lost our guiding national narrative—not completely, but certainly we have lost it as a near-universal article of faith. There is too much self-conscious doubt, too little confidence that the nation itself is as worthy of our devotion as is our subgroup. Indeed, the personalization of history is of a piece with the rising interest in more particularist considerations of race, class, gender, sexuality, ethnicity, religion, and so on, all of which have had the effect of draining energy away from the national story, rendering it either weak and indecisive—or the villain in a thousand stories of "subaltern" oppression.

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The problem is not that such stories do not deserve to be told. They do. There is always a horrific price to be paid in consolidating a nation, and one is obliged to tell the whole story if one is to count the cost fully. The brutal displacement of Indian tribes, the horrors of chattel slavery and post-emancipatory peonage, the grim conditions of industrial labor, the ongoing tragedy of racial hatred, the hidden injuries of class—all these stories and others like them need to be told and heard. It is not the content of these more particular stories that constitutes the problem for our dissolving national narrative. It is the fact that the push to tell them, and feature them, has been too successful. The story of American history has been deconstructed into a thousand pieces, a development that has been reinforced and furthered by both professional and ideological motives, but one that is likely in due course to have untoward public effects.

Which raises an interesting question: since throughout history strong and cohesive nations generally have had strong and cohesive historical narratives, how long can we do without one? Do our historians now have an obligation to help us recover one that amounts to something more than a bland-to-menacing general background against which the struggles of smaller groups can be highlighted? Or are the scholarly obligations of historians fundamentally at odds with taking on any public role, particularly one so prominent? Such a conundrum is not easily resolved. One should, however, at least acknowledge that it exists. And one should acknowledge that the decision to let a thousand flowers bloom and opt for "virtual front porches" is a kind of answer, even if it is couched in the form of a comfortable deferral. Who, after all, could possibly object to folks swapping yarns on the porch? But we will have to wait a very long time, a Darwinian length of time, before all those stories finally weave themselves into American History.

One should not overreact and deny storytelling its place, however; nor should one miss the implicit critique of professionalized history that is clearly embodied in the "My History" project. Whatever its shortcomings, "My History" constitutes a ringing affirmation that history is a form of consciousness as well as a body of knowledge, and that any effort to transform history into the exclusive property of an accredited guild of Ph.D.s will deservedly fail. Such populist sentiments are not enough in themselves, but they often are a useful first step. One can hope that some will carry the insight further, and come to the realization that the proper study of history is also a discipline of the soul. Which means that the ultimate goal of the study of history, like that of all the liberal arts, is what Plato saw as the goal of all inquiry—ushering us out of the mental caverns into which we are born and into the light of a real and public world.

We should not jettison all our stories in the process, since part of what the clear light shows us is the extent to which our identity is conjoined to things we cannot merely wish away. But neither should we be under the illusion that those stories are coextensive with History. This may be a blow to our vanity. But, given the dismal record of so much of human history, perhaps not such a bitter pill to swallow in the end. Indeed, it is our ability to think unseasonable thoughts, and withhold the songs of Zion when we find ourselves on Babylon's shores—in short, our commitment to meanings that we cannot see—that enables our existence as moral agents. For believing Christians and Jews, that very disjunction is a reason for being, and a reason for hope. They will have their own reasons to be glad that their history and America's history are two different, though intersecting, things.

Wilfred M. McClay *is SunTrust Chair of Humanities at the University of Tennessee at Chattanooga.*

Remembering the Rescuers

Patrick Henry

In a no-holds-barred article, "Auschwitz and the Professors," published in the June 1998 issue of *Commentary*, Gabriel Schoenfeld lashes out against several groups of academics who have distorted the study of the Holocaust by "transforming the murdered Jews of Hitler's Europe into so many 'variables,' 'case studies,' and 'gendered objects.'" While one can readily agree with many of the points he makes, Schoenfeld surely exaggerates when he writes that "the Holocaust is rapidly replacing Christmas as a marketable icon of man's *humanity* to man (see the Holocaust Memorial Museum, with its carefully calibrated upbeat message; or see *Schindler's List*)."

Clearly the Holocaust was one of the most horrendous instances of man's *inhumanity* to man ever recorded. The Holocaust museum is not disputing this. Yet it is important when face to face with such depravity to lift up the instances in which a few non-Jews nonetheless resisted this abomination, risking their lives and in many cases those of their families to rescue persecuted people. Why would we ever want to

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forget the only people who remembered the Jews during the Nazi plague?

Certainly we must remember the atrocities committed by the Nazis in the hope that we will prevent them from ever happening again. In order to "mend the world," however, we must also listen to other Jewish voices, those of Gay Block and Malka Drucker, Philip Hallie, Pierre Sauvage, and Eva Fogelman,* voices of those who have unearthed and celebrated the actions of courageous persons who rescued Jews during the Holocaust. Here we want to remember precisely so that such acts of compassion will be repeated in the future. Just as to the evil we say "never again," to the goodness we must say "again and again." These acts of solidarity, although accomplished by only a fraction of the 700 million people who lived in Nazi-occupied countries, are part of the story. Indeed, the only way out of the antihumanist darkness is to follow those lights that did shine, even if only here and there.

Although they would undoubtedly object on the ground that what they did was perfectly natural and that they themselves are absolutely ordinary people, in the war against the Jews these (mostly Christian) rescuers represented the *Lamed Vav*, the thirty-six unknown just persons whose task is to do good for their fellow human beings and who, the Talmud says, are required for the survival of the world. Inscribed on the Yad Vashem medal commemorating their actions is the Talmudic saying, "Whoever saves a single life is as one who has saved an entire world." By doing what they did, at the darkest hour in the twentieth century, the rescuers saved the concept of the human creature as a being capable of goodness, the very concept that allows our species not only to hope but to do the next good thing.

Our generation was not called upon to rescue Jews during the Holocaust but to restructure the world after Auschwitz. The question to which we must respond is not the excruciatingly unknowable "What would I have done had I lived in Occupied Europe?" It is rather the more urgently concrete "What can we do now to help build a world where another Auschwitz would be unthinkable?" In attempting this monumental endeavor, the rescuers can be our models.

Who, then, were the rescuers and how might we begin to become more like them?

The findings of Block and Drucker, who interviewed 105 rescuers from eleven different countries, and of Fogelman and her staff, who interviewed over 300 rescuers and the Jews they rescued, are similar. On the whole, neither gender, nor age, nor nationality, nor education, nor profession, nor economic class, nor religious leaning, nor political persuasion played a determining role as to who would be a rescuer. Whereas most people surrender personal responsibility for their actions when those actions are dictated by an authority figure, the rescuers of Jews obviously did not. Why not? Block, Drucker, and Fogelman would say because, in many cases, they were raised in homes where love was in abundance, where parents were altruistic and tolerant, and where children were disciplined by reason and explanation.

In these homes they were taught five essential principles: 1) that human beings are basically the same and differences between them are to be respected; 2) that the world is not divided into "us and them" but rather contains a common humanity; 3) that people should have a clear sense of right and wrong, should stand up for their beliefs, have moral integrity, self-confidence, and self-worth; 4) that all of us should be kind and compassionate toward others; and 5) that people should be of independent mind, and never simply follow the crowd.

This type of family life and the five principles mentioned do not constitute a necessary cause nor a sufficient explanation for the rescue work done during the Holocaust. Rescuing was basically a function of character, but it also depended upon external circumstances. It was not absolutely necessary to have been taught in this manner nor was it in all cases sufficient. Some people rescued Jews without this background; others failed to do so despite it. Yet too many rescuers have repeated the same story for us to ignore the points that appear in virtually all accounts of their lives.

In *The Altruistic Personality: Rescuers of Jews in Nazi Germany* (1988), Samuel P. and Pearl M. Oliner, who interviewed 406 rescuers, 126 nonrescuers, and 150 survivors, develop a "composite portrait" of the typical rescuer that matches the pattern discovered by Block, Drucker, and Fogelman. Kristen Monroe, in her study *The Heart of Altruism* (1996), indicts all those, including Hobbes, Freud, and Darwin, who would read altruism in terms of self-interest; on the contrary, she says, there is one common trait among all altruists: "[They] see themselves as bound to all mankind through a common humanity." While Oliner and Oliner did not find this tendency among all rescuers, they nonetheless make the revealing observation that "knowing whether someone was characterized by an extensive or a constricted orientation [to consider others as

* Gay Block and Malka Drucker, eds., *Rescuers: Portraits of Moral Courage in the Holocaust* (1992); Philip Hallie, *Lest Innocent Blood Be Shed: The Story of the Village of Le Chambon and How Goodness Happened There* (1979); Pierre Sauvage, *Weapons of the Spirit* (1987); Eva Fogelman, *Conscience and Courage: Rescuers of Jews During the Holocaust* (1994).

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worthy of moral concern] enabled us to predict who would be a rescuer or a nonrescuer in 70 percent of the individuals we studied."

There are several other important lessons to be drawn from the accounts of the rescuers at this crucial time when, as we enter the new millennium, there will soon be no one with any lived memories of the Holocaust. The first has to do with the language of difference that inundates our world today. While we may not be able to blame this language for the fragmentation and polarities in our society, certainly it has done nothing to improve the situation.

I cannot recall either Martin Luther King, Jr. (or Nelson Mandela for that matter) speaking a great deal about difference or celebrating cultural diversity. Indeed, it was the language of similarity that generated the civil rights movement because it is the language of similarity in the Constitution and the Bill of Rights that protects, not groups, but all persons regardless of race or creed.

If the rescuers have anything at all to tell us, it is that in a world obsessed with difference one can make a difference only by insisting on the essential similarity of all human beings. Montaigne is right, of course, to point out that "if our faces were not similar, we could not distinguish man from beast; if they were not dissimilar, we could not distinguish man from man." Differences are real; they must be recognized and respected. Communities are "common unions," however, and are built on the similarities between human beings. The truth revealed in the accounts of the rescuers is that diversity is *only* cultural, whereas, at the human level, there are no fundamental differences between us.

Like the ethnic cleansers of our day, the Nazis were firm believers in *essential* differences between human beings. Indeed, the official Handbook of the Hitler Youth Organization stated that "the foundation of the National Socialist outlook on life is the perception of the unlikeness of men." No one epitomized the opposite view of the rescuers more than André Trocmé, the pacifist Protestant minister who inspired a rescue mission in the village of Le Chambon-sur-Lignon in southern France. When a Vichy official threatened him because he knew Jews were being sheltered in the village, Trocmé responded: "We do not know what a Jew is; we only know men." It was precisely this view of the other as "another self" that accounted for the rescue of Jews during the Holocaust.

While, at one level, the rescuers represented the Lamed Vav, it is essential, at another level, to recognize that they were perfectly ordinary people like ourselves. To view them as heroes beyond our reach is to run the risk of becoming passive admirers banned from participation—bystanders, as it were. Although exemplary, even heroic, the rescuers nonetheless operated in our moral sphere. Only when we see them in this light are we able to receive the greatest gift they can bequeath us: the ability to see ourselves as beings capable of rescue.

The truth, of course, is that there are *only* ordinary human beings, all of whom are free. During the Holocaust, some chose to put women and children into gas chambers, others to risk their lives to protect Jews and other targets of Nazi hatred from such a fate. When American soldiers opened the camps in 1945, they were shocked. We knew man was evil but hadn't suspected he was *that* evil. Fifty-five years later, convinced that man *is* that evil, many have trouble dealing with the reality of the rescuers, with what they did, why they did what they did, and why it matters today.

Let's look at Le Chambon-sur-Lignon in 1940. In Vichy France, in a climate where anti-Semitism and informing on Jews was not only acceptable but patriotic, and where the wheels of evil were turned by thousands involved in the rounding up and deportation of foreign and French Jews, approximately five thousand mountain people risked their lives by welcoming and housing thousands of refugee Jews. No communal effort on this scale and for this length of time occurred anywhere else in Occupied Europe. Originally inspired, at least in part, by pacifist Protestant ministers whose Huguenot background made them feel close to the persecuted, the rescue mission was not limited to Le Chambon-sur-Lignon but involved all twelve Protestant parishes on the plateau with Darbyists, Catholics, Swiss Protestants, Jews, American Quakers, Evangelicals, nonbelievers, students, underground railroad workers, and simple people from all walks of life participating in the rescue efforts.

Houses of refuge were established to feed, clothe, protect, and educate young children who had been smuggled out of internment camps, sometimes just before their parents were deported. By the middle of the Occupation, there were seven funded houses in the Le Chambon-sur-Lignon region, mostly located outside the village. They were financed by Quakers, American Congregationalists, the Swiss Red Cross, even national governments like Sweden. Goodness spread here just as evil did elsewhere.

Five thousand refugees found shelter on the plateau; roughly 3,500 were Jewish; many were children. The countryside somehow absorbed them all. Based on simple notions of common decency—strangers who came to the door were housed and fed—goodness spread from farm to farm, from person to person, from one act to the next.

It would be a great mistake to see such altruism as

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selfless or as a form of self-abnegation. Here again the testimony of the rescuers is clear and unequivocal: they acted as they did not to lose their lives but to gain them. Many rescuers have said they found their greatest fulfillment through actions that could have cost them their lives.

The case of Philip Hallie makes it clear that the very narration of the stories of the rescuers can produce acts of spiritual rescue today. Hallie's World War II experiences and his early professional research taught him that life was a battle and only violence could put an end to violence. He relates his experiences as an artillery man firing white phosphorus warheads "that made stone buildings and people burst into flame," emphasizing a specific incident that would haunt him for the rest of his life. It happened during the last months of the war in Europe when his company, after having fired their warheads, went to verify the damage they had done. As Hallie walked through the targeted area, he saw "the blond, beautifully symmetrical head of a young man, with its SS cadet cap still firmly on it, but with no body and hardly any neck. The eyes were open. They were light blue and seemed to be looking dreamily up at the sky. The skin on that face had never known a razor or a beard." This vivid image of the evil he had done in the name of "good" would never leave him; he would never be able to see himself again as anything better than a "decent murderer."

As a scholar and teacher of ethics after the war, Hallie did extensive research on cruelty in human history, which, needless to say, only served to make his vision of the human condition still more bleak. His well-known study *The Paradox of Cruelty* (1969) confirmed his view that, although cruelty might often need the help of hatred and fear, it took place only in situations of power imbalance. Everywhere he turned, therefore, Hallie found the same law at work: "Harm stop[ped] harm; power stop[ped] power. That's all there was."

Seated in his office late one night in the mid-1970s, in the throes of a near-suicidal depression brought on by his growing sense of the overwhelming presence of violence and cruelty, Hallie happened upon an account of the village of Le Chambon-sur-Lignon. This was the first time he had heard about nonviolent resistance against the Nazis. "I was seeing spontaneous love that had nothing to do with sheer, brute power," he writes. "I was seeing a new reality, undergoing a revelation. Here was a place where help came from love, not from force." When he reached up to scratch his cheek, he discovered that his face was full of tears. What had caused those tears? "It was joy that did it, overwhelming joy," he explains. Part of the joy came from the knowledge that the people of Le Chambon-sur-Lignon had succeeded in obeying "both the positive [love thy neighbor] and negative [thou shalt not kill] ethics of the Hebrew Bible." Hallie had become a killer to obey the positive ethic of the Scriptures, but he "knew no one who was both clean and noble."

Hallie's tears were a testimony of moral praise for people who demonstrated both the natural reality of goodness and the fact that good nonviolent actions could combat violence and cruelty. This was a revelation that caused a conversion in Hallie. As the Latin word *conversio* indicates, it "turned him around" and changed his life. He went to Le Chambon-sur-Lignon, became as fascinated by the mystery of goodness as he was horrified by the reality of evil, and wrote *Lest Innocent Blood Be Shed*. Those tears were also tears of liberation. Unexpectedly, mysteriously, he had been saved from "the coercion of despair."

Hallie was a Jew "rescued" by the French villagers in 1975, saved from suicide or a life of despair. His account indicates that as long as we continue to tell the story of the rescuers, they will continue to perform acts of spiritual rescue in a world dominated by violence and the belief that human beings can only act out of self-interest. Their actions constitute a vivid and powerful communal memory bank that enables us to escape the prison of self-interest and to remember with joy that, even in the most difficult circumstances and against overwhelming odds, human beings are capable of goodness and courageous self-transcendence.

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Lincoln, Nietzsche, and the Constitution

Hadley Arkes

There was some puzzlement among John Stuart Mill's contemporaries that he should publish his tract *On Liberty*, with its deep concern for the tyranny of public opinion, when the press in England was the freest in the world and the public life of the country was vibrant with controversy in politics and religion.

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The historian Macauley restored a sense of scale when he remarked that Mill was "crying 'Fire!' during Noah's flood."

Readers tuned into the politics and law of our day may find themselves scratching their heads out of a comparable bewilderment if they encounter Professor Mark Tushnet's new book, *Taking the Constitution Away from the Courts* (Princeton University Press). On the surface, the writer would seem to agree with the participants in that "controversial" symposium on "the judicial usurpation of politics" in the pages of First Things (November 1996) in making a case for diminishing the power of the federal courts and of judicial review. But in his case, the political motive springs from the left, from a professor of law who has drawn his inspiration more from the world of Marx and the postmodernists than from the tradition of natural law.

And yet, he strikes off here on a course quite discordant with the left in our day. Since the decision in *Brown v. Board of Education* in 1954, the left has identified itself with the aggressiveness of the courts in imposing a regimen of "justice" far more strenuous than anything that seemed likely to emerge from politicians, who depend for their offices on the suffrages of the people. Tushnet records with a certain pride his service as a clerk to Justice Harry Blackmun in the work that brought forth *Roe v. Wade*, and no case represents more clearly the willingness of liberals to use the courts for the sake of imposing their policies when they have failed to gain their way at the polls.

Yet Tushnet now affects to abandon this mode of governing, no doubt to the deep surprise of his allies. As he sketches in his case for such a counterintuitive move, he brings back the image of Mill crying "fire" during the flood. For when he looks at the state of the judiciary, he sees a world that few people will recognize, and only a handful, surely, must inhabit. In that world, the Supreme Court is in the grip of reactionaries, doing the work of the right wing, even as Mr. Clinton appoints two justices to the Supreme Court and fills about a third of the lower federal courts with little Clintons. Tushnet sees a Court that is cutting back decisively on affirmative action, calling into question the whole scheme of racial entitlements. He finds nothing much to celebrate in the willingness of the Court to vindicate with a large hand the claims of free speech, as in striking down measures, backed by vast public support, to ban the burning and desecration of the American flag. For Tushnet, these are but poses of liberality that count for almost nothing when set against the willingness of the same Court to protect, with the same spirit, the freedom of people to spend their own money without limit on political campaigns. Behind the lofty claims of the First Amendment, Tushnet finds simply a disposition of the Court to protect the privileges and inequalities favoring the rich.

Of course the same Court has withdrawn the presumption in favor of protecting speech in the case of pro-life demonstrators, who seem to have been placed by the judges in a separate enclave unto themselves. But that persistent strand of illiberality Tushnet does not mention. For the liberal cause, there is no issue more central or more of a touchstone than the right to abortion. And there, a Court with five Reagan-Bush appointees has succeeded only in entrenching that right further. Most recently, federal judges exceeded even themselves by striking down about twenty of the laws in the states dealing with abortions at the point of birth. With exceptions remarkably rare, the political class that forms the courts has made it utterly clear that it will not brook the slightest limitation on the right to abortion.

That record is manifest even to casual observers of the courts, but Tushnet finds the irony and the hidden cunning of it all: a conservative Republican party has recruited support widely among Christians and pro-lifers, but Republican administrations bring into office judges of a different conservative cast. They are hostile to regulation and affirmative action, but they share the perspectives of their class on abortion, which they leave undisturbed while producing a conservative jurisprudence across the board everywhere else. Tushnet sees that effect as profound (while others of us find it often hard to discern). Even on abortion, he thinks that the laws formed and sustained by judges are far more brittle, far more open to erosion and overturning, than is usually supposed. Far better, he thinks, if the right to abortion had been enacted into law by a political movement, drawing widely on support in the country. Laws formed in that way would be far more riddled with compromise, but they would reflect the ambivalence that runs through the country on this issue, and in Tushnet's reckoning, such laws would have the advantage of being far more stable, far less likely to be reversed.

It takes a rare sensibility indeed to think that the right to abortion, crafted and sustained by the courts, stands in any danger of being overturned right now. But Tushnet may be here a curious, sensitive barometer. He may sense, rightly, just how wide but shallow is the understanding that supports the right to abortion. In his calculation, then, and in his temper, Tushnet is drawn back to a more populist politics, reminiscent of the 1930s, when the judges and judicial review were regarded as the enemy. He would prefer to rely on the arena of politics, with its summoning of passion and

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support, rather than on that college of men and women in robes, flexing their power without seeking consent. Tushnet finds himself drawn to an older construction, one favored by the participants in the symposium in FIRST THINGS: he would revive Lincoln's understanding of the limits on the reach of the courts, and at the same time he would affirm, with Lincoln, the real standing of the "political" branches to act as interpreters of the Constitution.

And yet, his is not exactly the version of Lincoln's argument that the symposiasts sought to revive. It is instead a truncated account of Lincoln's argument, and as one follows the thread of Tushnet's argument, it turns out that he offers a truncated version of everything else, too. Nothing is ever taken to the root, to the ground of principle that explains or justifies his judgments or his bold construction to "take back the Constitution" from the judges. At every step, something is left out, and if we trace the omissions there seems to be a purpose or design behind the things left out.

The puzzle may be assembled by returning to Lincoln. One of the oddities of our own day is how an understanding at once so simple and compelling, so bound up with the logic of the Constitution, is so thoroughly unfamiliar to most lawyers and judges. What Lincoln saw as the crisis of the "house divided" was brought to the stage of acuteness by the *Dred Scott* decision in 1857. That decision overturned the political settlement that had confined slavery and resisted its extension into the territories of the United States. But the Court held in the *Dred Scott* case that people could not be deprived of their property in slaves when they entered a territory of the United States. Lincoln argued that this decision would not be confined to the territories; that it could be extended to the states as well, making slavery national in scope, legal in every state. As Russell Hittinger has pointed out, Lincoln could not have taken his presidential oath promising to uphold the Constitution if the decisions of the Supreme Court were thought to be part of that Constitution, as though they were woven into the text itself. For Lincoln had led a national movement precisely to resist that decision in *Dred Scott*. He and his party would not resist it by considering the decision a nullity, or by refusing to respect the judgments of the Supreme Court. As they say these days, his resistance was more "nuanced," and in the debate with Stephen Douglas, Lincoln explained his position with some care:

> We do not propose that when Dred Scott has been decided to be a slave by the court, we, as a mob, will decide him to be free. We do not propose that . . . we will in any violent way disturb the rights of property thus settled; but we nevertheless do oppose that decision as a political rule which shall be binding on the voter, to vote for nobody who thinks it wrong, which shall be binding on the members of Congress or the President to favor no measure that does not actually concur with the principle of that decision. We do not propose to be bound by it as a political rule in that way. . . . We propose so resisting it as to have it reversed if we can, and a new judicial rule established upon this subject.

Later, during his First Inaugural Address, he refined the explanation: he was willing, he said, as President, to accept the judgment of the Court as "binding in any case, upon the parties to a suit, as to the object of that suit, . . . [and] limited to that particular case." But he would not accept the "principle" or the broader rule of law articulated in the case, unless he was finally persuaded of its rightness.

But that distinction, that critical part of the argument, gets left out of Tushnet's account, and for that reason perhaps he leaves entirely unmentioned the most dramatic early test of Lincoln's understanding. In the first days of the Lincoln Administration, a young black man in Boston sought a passport to study in France, but he was denied the passport on the strength of the *Dred Scott* decision: black people could not be citizens, and therefore it was reasoned that they could not carry American passports. For the same reason, a black inventor in Boston was denied a patent under the laws of the United States. Both cases were brought to the Administration by Senator Charles Sumner of Massachusetts. Neither case involved a slave litigating over his freedom. In both cases, agencies of the federal government applied the *principle* of the *Dred Scott* case to circumstances quite remote from that case. The Lincoln Administration quashed both decisions. It issued the passport and the patent, and it came forth with an opinion by Attorney General Edward Bates declaring that, in the understanding of the Lincoln Administration, free blacks born in the United States *were* in fact citizens of the United States. In all decisions coming under its hand, the Executive would act on that premise—even though it ran counter to the principle proclaimed by the Court in the *Dred Scott* case.

As the saying goes, we now fast-forward: it is the late 1980s, and a committee is constituted to advise the National Institutes of Health on the matter of experiments with fetal tissues. Even some of the conservative members of the committee are under the impression that the NIH must be governed by *Roe v. Wade*, that it must regard elective abortions as legitimate. In that

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event, the tissue drawn from fetuses in these "legitimate" surgeries must be tissue legitimately drawn. But if we take Lincoln's understanding seriously, it must have been possible for the Reagan Administration to say, in the style of the Lincoln Administration, that "this Administration will respect *Roe v. Wade* as it bears on the litigants in that case, but it will not accept the principle proclaimed in that case, and apply that principle to any measure that comes under our hand. This Administration cannot accept a right to destroy an unborn child either early or late in pregnancy, for any reason whatever." This kind of an argument could have been wrong only if Lincoln was wrong in the understanding that governed the cases of the two black men in Boston. But I would suggest that there is no way, under the Constitution, that Lincoln could have been wrong.

It is hard to imagine, however, that Tushnet would welcome, or even accept, this application of Lincoln's understanding. For if he had, there would be no need, or sense, to the program reflected in the title of the book: there would be no need to "tak[e] the Constitution away from the courts," because the power of the courts would be tightly circumscribed by confining the ruling in any case to the parties in the suit. But at the same time, the Supreme Court could still be quite vigorous in doing what the Court was meant to do in weighing the constitutionality of those measures that come under its review.

Tushnet's break from the courts is a break from the constraints imposed by the text of the Constitution and the discourse produced among lawyers. Tushnet would move beyond the confines of courts and make the Constitution an object of deliberation among ordinary people, in an arena of public arguments. That deliberation, he expects, will have to move beyond the text to the deeper principles or purposes that underlie the Constitution. At least eight times Tushnet comes back to the Declaration of Independence as the touchstone for this new scheme of constitutional interpretation. The Declaration contains, of course, that "proposition" that Lincoln regarded as the father of all principles among us, "All men are created equal." That commitment to "equality" is taken by Tushnet as the anchoring premise of the republic, the premise that defines us as a people. But it is also the principle that would guide the public discourse about policy and the meaning of the Constitution. Except for one notable thing: it is not the Declaration as Lincoln and the Founders understood it. In Tushnet's rendering, the Declaration is purged of its moral substance, and it can function then neither as a constraint on political power nor as a guide to our moral ends.

If there is any meaning in the Constitution, for Tushnet, it is a meaning that must depend on what he calls "secular reasons," reasons purged of any religious significance—Tushnet's Declaration omits that inconvenient reference to the "Creator" who endowed us with unalienable rights. In a stroke, Tushnet removes what the Founders understood as the source of those rights—and the Author of a law outside ourselves that even a majority is obliged to respect. Tushnet speaks of "secular reasons," but he is emphatically not doing natural law, for it is taken as a given in his circles that there are no moral truths, or even a fixed "nature" for human beings. At any rate, nowhere in this tract does Tushnet seek to explain the ground on which all these judgments about the Constitution will finally depend for their truth.

As he advances in the book, in fact, things move in quite the opposite direction. In good postmodernist form he announces that "the Declaration's principles, the values that constitute the American people, are always subject to change as the people change." But then how are they "principles"? They do not articulate truths, much less those truths, as Lincoln said, that were "applicable to all men and all times." If the principles of the Declaration are not really principles, based upon truths, then on what ground can we even claim their goodness? Why should we think that the political life based on those principles is better, or more just, than a politics based on premises wholly at odds with them? Tushnet, the child finally of postmodernism, delivers his valedictory:

> We are who we are because we are committed to the project of realizing the Declaration's principles. But we can start telling a different story about ourselves precisely because we constitute *ourselves*. We can, in short, change who we are. . . .
>
> In taking that step . . . we would have to rethink how we understand the original Constitution, the post-Civil War amendments, and the New Deal and the Great Society programs. [But] the Declaration's principles provide a story line that is much closer at hand.

A "story line"? First the reader was urged by Tushnet to leave the text of the Constitution and take his bearings from the principles of the Declaration. But those principles are detached from a Creator of nature and a moral law; they are not in fact principles but propositions of a contingent character, always subject to change; and they declare no moral truths. They disclose then no source of their rightness, and in the end we find that they provide only a "story line," a line we are free to change. What is left, after all of this, is

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not Lincoln or the Founders, but Nietzsche. We are left simply as agents with a will, asserting our freedom to remake our own stories, or our own sense of the moral universe.

And yet, behind all this feigning of philosophy, there is a political end to be served, and that becomes the serious lesson of this book: writers on the left are willing to revive, at least in part, Lincoln's argument about the limits on the courts, because they wish to prepare the ground for ignoring the decisions of the courts on race and affirmative action. Right now, universities in Texas are proceeding in the usual way, marking out favored races for hiring and promotion, even though the *Hopwood* decision in that state has called into the most serious question the constitutionality of these preferences. The Supreme Court has struck down schemes of racial gerrymandering in the forming of congressional districts; but still the Department of Justice under Clinton continues to press states to produce districts with the right racial profiles, yielding the right racial outcomes. Tushnet, it is clear, wishes to establish the ground for institutions at all levels to stage this kind of resistance and continue imposing liberal policies, even against the holdings of the federal courts.

Several years ago, in an intimate gathering in New York, one of our leading conservative jurists listened attentively as some scholars and lawyers sought to set forth again Lincoln's understanding of the limits on the courts. The jurist listened with wide eyes, and he agreed that Lincoln's argument was clear and compelling. But he was quite as certain that it was no longer usable in our law: it was too novel, too unfamiliar; it would not be understood. To that our inclination was to say, well, explain it again, explain it anew.

But that incident, combined with Prof. Tushnet's book, captures an enduring problem in our politics: instead of giving decisive weight to Lincoln's reasoning, conservatives are more inclined to gauge the currents of opinion, to estimate what is likely to be accepted in the temper of our own day. They will hold back from restoring Lincoln's argument, lest it shock the public with its novelty. At the same time, liberals are serenely indifferent to the grounds of their judgment, and so they will invoke Lincoln's argument without the slightest hesitation, if they think it can provide at least a plausible rationale, or cover, for what they are determined to do. Just when conservative judges are reluctant to adopt Lincoln's understanding, liberals will do it readily and happily as a means of entrenching liberal policies.

But the deeper lesson is to be aware of what is unfolding before our eyes. With a jolt of recognition may come an access of wit and prudence: there is no reason for conservatives to hold back any longer from incorporating Lincoln's argument as their own. And in restoring that argument, they would restore the moral logic of the Constitution.

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Believing in the Word

Dian Saderup Monson

The recent death of Catholic author Andre Dubus represents a loss to anyone interested in the fate of contemporary religious fiction in America. Dubus embodied a combination rarely found among fiction writers of faith: superb, non-didactic craftsmanship and profound spiritual sensitivities. His death has made me reflect, again, on current trends in literary criticism, for while I doubt any serious critic would deny Dubus' abilities, few seem equipped to discern his most profound purposes.

This is hardly surprising. Since the rise of the French linguist/philosopher Jacques Derrida and the advent of deconstructive literary theory in the early 1980s, the very idea of discoverable authorial intention has apparently been rendered absurd, something to be discussed, perhaps, by hapless junior high school English teachers but not by serious scholars. Words are, after all, "indeterminate" in their meanings and texts are valuable not for what their authors may have hoped to convey through them, but for how skillfully the critic can apply his own meanings to the "unstable" sentences on the page. I recall a student in graduate school who in a seminar on theories of the novel commented offhandedly: "We all know authors can't communicate with readers." Nobody else challenged the statement, and in my ignorance of theory I felt unqualified to do so.

These ten years later I still regret my cowardly silence. Today, when I teach freshman English, a student will almost invariably ask, "Well, Mrs. Monson, uh, what do you think Wharton [or whoever] is trying to say?" While such a question betrays naivete—a novel cannot be reduced to a set of themes, a moral, or a message—it nevertheless articulates in rudimentary fashion an intuition that is exactly on target: when good novelists write they have things they are

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interested in achieving with their words. They have ideas, feelings, and experiences in mind that cannot be adequately expressed apart from fictional images. It is counterintuitive to approach a written work and not be at least somewhat curious as to what the writer of the work envisioned as he composed it. Words are symbols created expressly to communicate, and without the need to communicate, that is to commune, human beings would never have fashioned language at all.

In some ways a loss of belief in the efficacy of language to transmit experience from one human being to another seems akin to a loss of belief in God. The Christian Bible likens God to the Word: "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God." St. John's meaning may be enigmatic, but it does seem clear that he is somehow linking language with divinity. If as a people we lose our belief in language—in its capacity to span the gulf between speakers and listeners, writers and readers, or its efficacy in articulating reality—we are cut loose, set adrift, each individual stranded in time. In one way Derrida was right: we surely invest words with whatever meaning they contain. Yet that investiture is a central act of faith between and amongst people. The writing of a poem is not unlike the uttering of a prayer—words articulated against the void, sent out with purpose upon the dark expanse of space.

And so when a student asks about an author's meaning I answer him seriously, but try to steer him away from treating fiction as nonfiction. The novel especially, with its breadth and scope, has a peculiar capacity to carry us away, virtually transport us, in ways that by comparison other written literature can do only feebly. A novel is not an intellectual puzzle to be pulled apart and reassembled so that all its themes and messages are explicit; approaching it that way grossly violates the text's integrity. The finest novels—Faulkner's tangled, majestic, brooding monsters, for example—ultimately resist interpretation; rather, they may suck us in, bathing us, as in the case of Faulkner, in a recreation of primary human passion. One may read *The Sound and the Fury* or *Absalom! Absalom!* and simply be befuddled, or one may read with a kind of transfixed horror, drawn into irresistible psychic alliance with the doomed, infantile Quentin Compson or the implacable, impenetrable Sutpen.

A significant part of my pleasure in a novel comes as faith grows in me that my experience of the text somehow approximates the author's vision. The novel yields many substantial fruits, and among the most desirable is this sense of communion: I have leapt into the dark and connected. Most of my academic peers insist that such a sense of connection is illusory. I would rather call it fragmentary: in reading, we may see through a glass darkly, but we are not entirely blind, and the tantalizing possibility of one day seeing face to face can energize all our efforts as readers and interpreters.

Many contemporary critics refuse to admit this possibility of communion. For them, a text is produced under such suspicious circumstances (i.e., within a social and cultural milieu that unavoidably biases the author's sensibility) that it is positively dangerous to surrender to it, to be carried off into an imagined world. Instead of opening a novel and plunging into its constructed realm, such critics range widely over the surface of a work, perhaps caressing it lovingly, but just as often picking and plucking at it—demystifying it—as they extract pieces to support their own social or political agendas.

The best of these critics illuminate points that genuinely enlarge our understanding of how societies function. Too many interpreters, however, violate the clear sense of a text to serve their own ends and in so doing turn *reading* into a purely political exercise. As a teacher of young readers I refuse to accept what "we all know": that authors cannot communicate with their audiences. Perhaps that proposition, like God's famous death, is true. But I reject it ultimately on practical grounds: I am better off—a more faithful, interested reader, more susceptible to moral enlightenment, to wonder, and to joy—believing otherwise.

Amidst such a literary culture, Andre Dubus published much of his fiction. I cannot forget my dismay at reading Vivian Gornick's essay "Tenderhearted Men," discussing the work of Raymond Carver, Richard Ford, and Dubus, published in the *New York Times Book Review* in the early nineties and reprinted in her critical collection *The End of the Novel of Love* (1997). Gornick details how all three authors' depictions of male/female relations leave her with "the taste of ashes in my mouth," for they "invariably subscribe" to ideas of manhood that haven't changed in over fifty years. Of Dubus' characters she writes, "Even if the models for these stories still exist—and, of course, they do, in the tens of thousands—they are, in some sense, no longer plausible. They seem to occur in a vacuum of history." The experience of "tens of thousands" of people is no longer plausible enough to write about! As if these masses, because they have failed to keep step with the times, now live lives so void of interest and meaning we as readers can do nothing but shudder at their existence and refuse them entrance to our consciousness.

Gornick's reading of Dubus' "A Father's Story"

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reveals her near absolute failure to read his fiction on anything close to its own terms. She stands outside the text, passing judgment, unable to surrender to the spiritual persuasion of the story. While she muddles around, complaining that "A Father's Story" thwarts the efforts of men and women to join hands across the open ditches surrounding "each of our lives," Dubus' tale reveals with stunning force something of the grace and love of God.

In it, Luke Ripley, a middle-aged father—devout Catholic, divorced, never remarried—breaks the law with awful consequence. His twenty-year-old daughter Jennifer comes to him late at night. She has had a few beers with friends, and she has struck a man on the road while driving home. The father does not call the police. Rather, he drives to the scene of the accident. He finds the body in a ditch; the young man dies in his presence. Had he called for help an ambulance could have met him at that fateful stretch of road; perhaps the victim's life could have been saved. At the very least a priest could have performed the last rites. The father's most urgent desire, however, had been to spare his daughter the consequences of her act.

Gornick's eyes—so narrowly trained upon matters of gender—now succeed in missing the entire spiritual thrust of the story. She recounts the crucial final passage in which the guilty father reflects on his conversations with God:

> I do not feel the peace I once did: not with God, nor the earth, nor anyone on it. . . . In the mornings . . . I say to Him: I would do it again. For when she knocked on my door, then called to me, she woke what had flowed dormant in my blood since her birth, so that what rose from the bed was not a stable owner or a Catholic or any other Luke Ripley I had lived with for a long time, but the father of a girl.
>
> And he says: I am a Father too.
>
> True. . . . And if one of my sons had come to me that night, I would have phoned the police and told them to meet us with an ambulance at the top of the hill.
>
> Why? Do you love them less?
>
> I tell Him no, it is not that I love them less, but that I could bear the pain of watching and knowing my sons' pain, could bear it with pride as they took the whip and the nails. But You never had a daughter and, if You had, You could not have borne her passion.
>
> So, He says, you love her more than you love Me.
>
> I love her more than I love truth.
>
> Then you love in weakness, He says.
>
> As You love me, I say, and I go with an apple or carrot out to the barn.

Who among us, Gornick asks, "is to be moved or comforted by the assurance that we are all as children commended to the care and pity of a Fatherly Being, but that, still, only a son need bear the consequences of his act"?

In her reading of this passage, Gornick confuses Luke Ripley's voice with God's, as if the Heavenly Father holds males accountable while shielding females from justice. But Ripley speaks as an individual human being. For the first time in his life, he has experienced a dimension of love that simply defies God's law. At whatever cost, he will spare his daughter suffering. Despite the offense Gornick takes at a father overwhelmed by the impulse to protect a daughter because she is a daughter, Ripley's response to Jennifer's tragic deed is deeply believable and deeply human.

And it serves to figure in a small way the larger love of God for all humankind. "I love her more than I love truth," Ripley says to God. "Then you love in weakness," God replies. "As You love me," Ripley answers. What Ripley has apprehended is not so much what it means to love a daughter (his love for the girl is simply the vehicle that brings revelation), but what it means to love defiantly, desperately, transcendently. And what he clearly suggests in his closing line *As You love me* is that God loves him (Ripley, a son) more than God loves the truth about him. The tender, passionate protection Ripley grants his daughter—the grace—is like unto that mysterious grace the Christian God grants us all. God's love, the story implies, undermines His law, defies rationality, and redeems humankind even as it sets the universe, in some awful and awesome sense, a-kilter.

When we read, we certainly may do more than carry on isolated conversations with ourselves. In Gornick's reading of Dubus the spirit of his work is absent. She chooses to stand aloof from the fiction she critiques, refusing to surrender to its terms. I by my faith and life experiences may have been more advantageously positioned than Gornick to submit to Dubus' story. Yet surely fiction must be able to expand our experience, to stretch our capacities to see the world from another's perspective. It must be able to engage one's mind and soul with the mind and soul of someone outside one's self—which is why the best readers of good fiction must also possess a clear moral imagination. Gornick's failure, I believe, is ultimately a failure of faith—in language and in the possibility of communion between author and reader. Texts for her do not mediate the space between people; they merely serve to illustrate it.

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For the writer of religious fiction this loss of faith in language is particularly unfortunate, for while the writer of great religious fiction will never preach, the impulse to set the stage for revelation is surely intense. I think of Flannery O'Connor. "The novelist," she wrote in a letter, "renders his vision so that it can be transferred, as nearly whole as possible, to the reader." That O'Connor had a vision to transfer is indisputable; few writers have spoken so explicitly about the themes and underlying assumptions in their work. She believed in the devil, she believed in sin, she believed in God's grace and in humanity's redemption by Christ.

In justifying her use of the grotesque in fiction she explained that the Christian novelist "may well be forced to take ever more violent means to get his vision across to this hostile audience [i.e., modern secular readers]. . . . You have to make your vision apparent by shock—to the hard of hearing you shout, and for the almost-blind you draw large and startling figures." O'Connor wished to communicate about matters she felt to be of life-and-death consequence. She believed in her power as a storyteller to create worlds charged with meaning and invite readers into those worlds. She believed she could share her vision through the mediation of language. Though theoretically problematic, that belief still stands as a challenge to today's skeptical critics. It is a belief, I think, with which Andre Dubus would have sympathized.

There are many ways to read stories. Some texts are surely more baffling to penetration, more willfully ambiguous, than others. Our removal in time and culture from the moment of a story's composition creates a barrier between author and reader that can never be fully overcome—the greater the temporal and cultural gap, the larger the difficulties in interpretation. Nevertheless, I believe it possible to apprehend portions of the spirit in which a story has been written. Not all stories lend themselves to such apprehension, but many do. I do not come to this belief through theoretical reasoning, but through my encounters with texts. As I read fiction and teach it I will seek to maintain a certain faith, not only in the precarious reliability of words, but in the notion that authors use words with purpose that readers may, by a combination of wit and grace, divine.

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The Names of Things

Take blue. It is the sky
bright with summer—a hue
that gladdens the land.

Sometimes it defines the risqué—
a blue joke. Then it's an
indecent devaluing sort of blue.

Occasionally it must name
the blues—that gloomy sound
that never sees a summer day.

It can name the unexpected—
news that comes out of the blue
like rain from a cloudless sky.

Blue can even christen the rare
and infrequent. That happens
only once in a blue moon.

Frederick Zydek

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Can Philosophy Be Christian?

Avery Dulles

The possibility of a Christian philosophy was fiercely debated in the late 1920s and the early 1930s, especially in France, where several distinguished historians of philosophy, including Émile Bréhier, vigorously denied that there had been, or could be, any such thing. It was, Bréhier said, as absurd as a Christian mathematics or a Christian physics. Genuine philosophy, in his opinion, had been suffocated by Christian dogma in the Middle Ages, and did not reemerge until the seventeenth century, when Descartes picked up about where the Greeks had left off.

The Catholic medievalist Étienne Gilson led the counterattack. He opened his Gifford Lectures on *The Spirit of Medieval Philosophy* with two chapters devoted respectively to the problem and the notion of Christian philosophy, which he defined as "every philosophy which, although keeping the two orders formally distinct, nevertheless considers the Christian revelation as an indispensable auxiliary to reason." In a series of books and articles published over the next few decades, Gilson demonstrated the vibrancy of medieval philosophy. He convincingly argued that the biblical concepts of God, creation, history, and the human person had made a decisive impact on the whole history of modern philosophy.

In our own time, at least here in the United States, there seems to be a rather general recognition that Christians have a distinctive approach to philosophy. We have had since 1926 an American Catholic Philosophical Association, which now has some 1,200 members, but there was nothing equivalent for Protestants until 1979, when William P. Alston, Alvin Plantinga, and several of their friends established the Society of Christian Philosophers. Today, twenty-one years later, it counts more than a thousand members, and enrolls a rapidly growing number of younger scholars. It is thoroughly ecumenical in its constituency.

These initiatives, however, are scarcely typical of the university world, which finds the concept of Christian philosophy paradoxical, even nonsensical. Some philosophers simply rule out any consideration of revelation as lying beyond the purview of their discipline. Emotivists in the tradition of A. J. Ayer still dismiss religion as noncognitive. A host of agnostics, pragmatists, relativists, and deconstructionists, while differing among themselves, form a common front in opposition to revelation as a font of abiding truth.

Pope John Paul II, in his 1998 encyclical *Fides et Ratio*, shows himself acutely aware of the present intellectual climate. With his customary courage, he dares to challenge current trends in both philosophy and theology and in so doing raises the question of Christian philosophy in a new form. From the very beginning of the encyclical John Paul II reminds his readers that philosophy, in its etymological sense, means the love of wisdom (para. 3). Philosophy, therefore, is a human search for truth about ultimate questions (73); it is a journey awakened by wonder springing from contemplation of creation (4).

In a stricter sense, philosophy is a rigorous mode of thought; it elaborates a systematic body of knowledge in which the elements are held together in organic unity by logical coherence (4). Ideally the system should comprehend reality in all its dimensions, but the Pope acknowledges that no one system achieves this ideal. Because of the limits of the human mind and the particularities of human cultures, every philosophical system is partial and incomplete. For this rea-

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son philosophical inquiry holds primacy over philosophical systems (4).

Philosophy, according to the Pope, operates within the order of natural reason (9), using its own methods (49), which differ from those of theology. Although philosophers disagree among themselves about the methods of their discipline, they appear to be unanimous in holding that philosophy does not derive its proofs from the word of God received in faith.

Theology, by contrast, is "a reflective and scientific elaboration of the understanding of God's word in the light of faith" (64). According to John Paul II, the starting point of theology is always the word of God given in history and accepted in faith (73). By "faith" he means a free, obedient, and deeply personal decision by which one entrusts oneself to God and acknowledges the truth of what God has revealed (13). The chief purpose of theology is to provide an understanding of revelation and of the content of faith (93). The heart of theological inquiry is the mystery of the triune God, which becomes accessible to faith through the Incarnation of the Son and the descent of the Spirit of truth upon the Church (93).

Christian philosophers have reached no agreement about how philosophy is related to faith. The classical positions fall into three main types.

According to the first school of thought, sometimes called Augustinian, there is a Christian philosophy, and in fact the only true and adequate philosophy is Christian. In the early centuries of the Christian era, apologists such as Justin and Clement maintained that Christianity is the true philosophy (38), but they seem to have been using the term "philosophy" in a broad sense as equivalent to human wisdom. In the Middle Ages, St. Anselm made a sharper distinction between faith and reason. Having accepted the existence of God and the fact of the Incarnation on authority in faith, he tried to demonstrate these truths by "necessary reasons" that would compel the assent of Jews and pagans who did not credit the authority of Scripture. He apparently considered that he had succeeded in this endeavor. Much later, rationalist philosophers such as Hegel contended that the mysteries of the Trinity and the Incarnation, initially accepted by faith, could be demonstrated by pure reason, at which point faith would no longer be needed in order to affirm them as true.

Hegel and his school, being rationalists, were convinced that reason is superior to faith. They integrated theology with philosophy by letting it be swallowed up by philosophy, but it is also possible to integrate the two disciplines to the advantage of theology. In the nineteenth century, the traditionalists, denying the autonomy of reason, held that all true philosophy was based on divine revelation, accepted in faith. In our own century Gilson came to the conclusion that in reasoning about God and things necessary to salvation "no one can pretend to reach truth unless he relies upon revelation to safeguard him against error." The remarkable advances achieved by philosophy in the Middle Ages, he contends, were due to the guidance and enrichment it received from revelation.

While this view tends to merge the objects of philosophy and theology, it preserves a difference of method: theology proceeds by way of authority, whereas philosophy relies on evidence and intrinsic reasoning. Christian philosophy, as Gilson came to use the term, meant "the use the Christian makes of philosophical reason when, in either of these two disciplines [philosophy or theology], he associates religious faith and philosophical reflection." According to Gerald McCool, Gilson understood Christian philosophy as the philosophical moment in Catholic theology. While retaining a formal distinction between the two disciplines, he argued that the Christian should not try to develop a philosophy independent of theology.

The second classical position is the direct contrary of the first. Instead of saying that philosophy must be Christian, the neo-Thomists of the Louvain school, following in the footsteps of Cardinal Désiré Mercier, held that philosophy must proceed rigorously by its own methods, without allowing itself to be influenced by faith. Fernand Van Steenberghen, representing this school, insisted that philosophy must be open on an equal basis to believers and nonbelievers. Christian philosophers, he contended, should not allow themselves to be isolated in a ghetto, as would occur if Gilson's positions prevailed. (As Christian believers, Mercier and Van Steenberghen of course accepted revelation. They also insisted that it was possible to reflect on revelation in a scientific way. But such reflection, they maintained, was by definition theology, since it was done in the light of faith.)

While concurring with the rationalists that there could be no specifically Christian philosophy, the Louvain neo-Thomists rejected Bréhier's negative assessment of medieval philosophy. The faculties of philosophy in the medieval universities, they maintained, achieved significant advances in the strictly philosophical field without allowing faith or theology to interfere with their autonomy. The same can be done by the believer today.

The two classical positions thus far described stand at opposite ends of the spectrum. The first school maintains that philosophy ought to be Christian, since it requires the positive influence of faith; the second school denies the possibility of Christian philosophy

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on the ground that philosophy must be a self-contained product of autonomous reason.

Between these two contrasting positions there are several mediating positions, which make up my third category. Jacques Maritain, differing only slightly from Gilson, argued that human reason, although limited in range, can achieve significant insights about ultimate questions without the help of revelation. Revelation attests to many naturally knowable truths such as the existence of God, the spirituality of the rational soul, and the dependence of the whole world on God's creative action. In dealing with truths that can in principle be known both by revelation and by reason, Christian philosophers may allow faith to indicate where the truth lies, but as philosophers they are obliged to establish their conclusions by independent reasoning. Maritain concludes with a typically Scholastic distinction: philosophy can be Christian in the order of exercise, but not in the order of specification. Christian philosophy is philosophy itself conducted by a thinker who profits from revelation.

A second mediating position is that usually identified with Maurice Blondel. He held that neo-Thomists such as Van Steenberghen and Maritain treated philosophy too much as though it were a self-contained system, in which revelation could appear as a mere intruder. The whole supernatural order could then be written off by nonbelievers as an unnecessary superstructure over and above a self-sufficient world of reason and experience. As an alternative to this extrinsicism Blondel contended that philosophy, when it operates without any reference to faith, inevitably becomes aware of its own limits. It can discover within the human person a dynamism toward a goal that nature cannot reach and toward a truth that reason cannot discover. Blondel rejected the idea of a philosophy that would be Christian in the sense of being based on revelation, but he held that all sound philosophy, holding fast to its own principles, would lead to the threshold of revealed truth. It could thus be Christian in spirit and in orientation.

Henri de Lubac, developing a third mediating position, agreed with Gilson about the necessity for philosophy to be informed by Christian revelation in order for it to learn the most important truths of the natural order. Blondel, in his view, spoke too much as though the philosopher could begin in a void, without regard for tradition and culture. But in agreement with Blondel, de Lubac held that philosophy is affected by the natural desire for the supernatural; it is naturally Christian and is oriented toward revelation as its own completion. The positions of Gilson and Blondel thus correct and complete each other.

Building on these classical positions, John Paul II in *Fides et Ratio* distinguishes three states or stances of philosophy in relation to faith. He speaks of a philosophy prior to faith, a philosophy positively influenced by faith, and a philosophy that functions within theology to achieve some understanding of faith.

In describing the first state of philosophy, John Paul II accepts the thesis of Van Steenberghen and Maritain that there can be authentic philosophy outside of faith. Arguing rigorously from rational criteria, one can attain conclusions that are true and certain (75). In affirming this position, the Pope would seem to be on solid ground. Plato and Aristotle, while lacking the guidance of Jewish and Christian revelation, rank among the greatest philosophers of all time. They ably refuted sophistic errors such as materialism, relativism, and hedonistic pragmatism; they showed the capacity of reason to discern the intelligible features of the real order; and they laid a solid groundwork for the metaphysical principles of noncontradiction, sufficient reason, and causality.

John Paul II, however, does not settle for a closed system of rational knowledge. With Blondel and de Lubac, he is keenly aware that an autonomous philosophy cannot be self-sufficient. The journey of philosophy, he holds, cannot be completed without faith. Just as faith seeks understanding, so, conversely, understanding seeks faith (16-23). Philosophy, in perceiving its own limits, can serve as a preparation for the gospel.

This basically Augustinian position has roots that long antedate Blondel. Even before the Christian era, Plato recognized that there were pressing questions that the philosopher could not answer without the help of a divine revelation, which he himself did not claim to have received. In Plato's *Phaedo*, Simmias confesses to Socrates the difficulty of attaining certitude about the fate of the soul after death. The wise man, he says, should take the best and most irrefragable of human theories and let them serve as a raft upon which to sail through life "not without risk, as I admit, if he cannot find some word of God which will more surely and safely carry him."

The insufficiency of reason was expressed in another way by Immanuel Kant, who claimed that in showing reason's incompetence to attain speculative certitude about questions concerning God, freedom, and immortality, he was making room for faith. Kant may have excessively minimized the scope of theoretical reason, and his conception of faith may have fallen short of Christian orthodoxy, but we may concur with his thesis that by recognizing the limits of reason we can better appreciate the need for faith.

Schooled in post-Kantian personalist phenomenology, John Paul II is deeply sensitive to the subjective component in human knowledge. Philosophy, as he

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sees it, is not so much a set of conclusions as a mode of inquiry (76). As I have said, it is first of all a process of exploration and only secondarily a matter of systematization (4).

Philosophy, in this Augustinian perspective, is not a dispassionate clinical inquiry; it has to be pursued with trust, commitment, and creative imagination. Again and again in his encyclical, John Paul II adverts to the unquenchable thirst for truth that God has implanted in the human heart (opening sentence and 29). Modern philosophy, he observes, has the great merit of focusing attention on the human spirit and its yearning to understand (5); human knowledge, he says, is a journey that allows no rest (18, 33). In the footsteps of Anselm, the Pope asserts that "the intellect must seek what it loves: the more it loves, the more it desires to know" (42). The philosopher should be driven by a passion for ultimate truth, a passion that faith can intensify (56).

The philosopher, considered in the order of actual existence, is no stranger to belief. Anyone who begins to philosophize does so as a member of a community that has received a body of beliefs and values transmitted from the past. Only after such views have been unreflectively assimilated does the philosopher bring critical inquiry to bear (31). The tools of critical reason have themselves been forged and refined in the philosophical tradition.

Even when embarking on the quest for new insights, reason is sustained by a certain primordial faith. The discoverer begins by assuming that the thirst for truth, so ineradicably rooted in the human heart, is not vain and useless. The sense that there is an answer waiting to be found sustains the confidence and perseverance needed to conduct the search (29). At this point in his encyclical the Pope speaks in terms reminiscent of the great philosopher of science, Michael Polanyi.

John Paul II, as I understand him, would agree with Blondel that the human spirit has an inbuilt restlessness toward the divine, an inner exigency for a supernatural message of salvation. But he would probably add, as de Lubac and Karl Rahner do, that philosophy would not be able to articulate the concept of the supernatural without help from revelation. When practiced in a Christian culture, philosophy receives its concept of the supernatural from the believing community.

The passage from autonomous philosophy to faith does not take place without a conversion. John Paul II is sensitive to the perspectives of Christian existentialism, typified by Søren Kierkegaard and Fyodor Dostoevski. The word of the Cross, he acknowledges, seems to crush and contradict the philosopher's ideal of wisdom; the wisdom of the Cross challenges every philosophy (23). But truth cannot be incompatible with truth. "At the summit of its searching reason acknowledges that it cannot do without what faith presents" (42). In the final analysis, truth proves to be one: Christ, who calls himself the truth, brings the quest of philosophy to a surpassing fulfillment (34).

Our consideration of the insufficiency of autonomous reason brings us to the second state of philosophy, which arises after revelation has occurred and been accepted in faith. John Paul II agrees with those who hold that Christian revelation can make a valid contribution to philosophy, as may be seen from the examples of outstanding thinkers such as Thomas Aquinas. With Gilson and Maritain, he teaches that there is such a thing as Christian philosophy. The term, he says, serves "to indicate a Christian way of philosophizing, a philosophical speculation conceived in dynamic union with faith" (76). It includes important developments of philosophical thinking that would not have happened without the stimulus of the word of God (76).

The term "Christian philosophy" should not be restricted to the Middle Ages. John Paul II, as I understand him, would find it appropriate for the philosophical writings of the Cappadocian Fathers, Augustine, and other patristic authors, not to mention the Christian thinkers of modern times. Such philosophers as Locke, Leibniz, and Malebranche would be unintelligible without reference to their Christian faith.

Although John Paul II accepts the term "Christian philosophy," he warns against certain misunderstandings. The term, he explains, does not mean that the Church has an official philosophy. It might have been thought a century ago that Thomism was the Church's one philosophy, but the present Pope avoids taking that position. At the time of Leo XIII, he declares, it seemed that "renewed insistence upon the thought of the Angelic Doctor" was "the best way to recover the practice of a philosophy consonant with the demands of faith" (57). While encouraging recourse to the wisdom of Aquinas, John Paul II allows for a plurality of systems. Acceptable systems of philosophy, he believes, must share the metaphysical realism of St. Thomas, including his position on the natural knowability of the existence of God (53). The Angelic Doctor is an authentic model for all who seek the truth and who wish to profit from revelation without demeaning the just autonomy of reason (78). He evinced an exemplary passion in the search for objective truth (44) and exhibited admirable courage by tackling new problems and entering into dialogue with the Arab and Jewish thought of his time (43).

Among the great medieval philosophers John Paul

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II singles out the "great triad" of Anselm, Bonaventure, and Thomas Aquinas (74). He has words of praise for John Henry Newman, Antonio Rosmini, Vladimir Soloviev, and Vladimir Lossky (74), all of whom philosophized in the light of their Christian faith without being classifiable as Thomists. Although he does not mention Blondel and Max Scheler by name, he finds merit in the philosophy of immanence and phenomenology (59). While discountenancing an unprincipled syncretism, he is prepared to learn from alien philosophical movements, even those he finds dangerous and debilitating. "The currents of thought which claim to be postmodern," he writes, "merit appropriate attention." But they should not be allowed to destroy all certitude and inculcate a total absence of meaning (91).

In his reflections on Christian philosophy, John Paul II distinguishes between two kinds of benefit that faith confers upon it. The first is an influence on the thinking subject. Faith purifies philosophical reason in a twofold way. On the one hand, it cures philosophy of the pride to which it has at times been subject and with which it was reproached by Paul, Pascal, and Kierkegaard, among others. On the other hand, faith inspires philosophy with courage to tackle certain difficult questions, such as the problem of evil and suffering, that might seem insoluble except for the light cast on them by revelation (76).

The second influence of faith upon philosophy is objective. Revelation, as already mentioned, assists reason to discover certain truths that are in principle accessible to reason but might never be found in fact without revelation. John Paul II places in this category the ideas of creation as the action of a free and personal God; sin as an offense against God; the dignity, freedom, and equality of human persons; and the meaning of history as event (76).

The Pope at one point speaks of reason and faith being interior to each other (17). The relationship between them, he says, is circular (73). Revelation can assist philosophy by stirring it to explore unsuspected paths and by warning it against false trails.

Because of the intimate connection between philosophy and faith, the ecclesial Magisterium, in its ministry to faith, cannot ignore philosophy. It has a right and a duty to encourage promising initiatives and to warn against aberrations incompatible with the Church's faith. This discernment should not be seen as an intrusion but as a service to right reason and to the philosopher's quest for truth (50-51).

Thus far we have been speaking of philosophy as an independent branch of study, standing apart from theology even though influenced by it. Before concluding, we must consider philosophy in its third state, in which it functions within theology, which takes its departure from revelation received in faith. Revelation goes beyond reason in the sense that it contains many truths that philosophy cannot discover. These truths are strict mysteries, but they are not conundrums.

Revelation, since it comes from the divine Logos, is inherently intelligible (66). With the help of philosophy, the theologian can achieve a limited but nevertheless very fruitful understanding of such mysteries. Speculative theology makes use of philosophy in its reflection on revealed truths such as the processions of the Trinity, the union of the two natures in the person of Jesus Christ, and the concepts of guilt and atonement that lie at the basis of moral theology (66).

In connection with dogmatic theology, John Paul II refers to the hallowed term *ancilla theologiae*, which has a legitimate meaning even though it is subject to misunderstanding. The service rendered by philosophy, he says, is not a matter of servile submission to commands given by theology as a higher discipline. Rather, the term means that philosophy, while holding fast to its own principles, can be fruitfully used within theology (77). This utilization in no way impairs the proper autonomy of philosophy, for if philosophy were denatured, it could not perform its distinctive service. One of the benefits of sound philosophy is to show that the truth of dogmatic formulas is not tied to any particular time or culture, as some have imagined (95-96). Truth is universal by its very nature (27).

To amplify somewhat the Pope's teaching on dogmatic theology, it may be helpful to recall several points of traditional teaching from Thomas Aquinas and the First Vatican Council. Although reason cannot prove the existence or even the possibility of strict mysteries such as the Trinity and the Incarnation, it can expose the errors of those who attempt to demonstrate their impossibility. Philosophical reason, furthermore, can show the analogies between the orders of nature and grace; it can exhibit the internal coherence of the whole supernatural order as revealed by Christianity, casting light on each revealed truth by manifesting its harmony with other revealed truths and with the goals of human existence. Meditation on the data of revelation can show, finally, that the truths of faith fulfill those aspirations of the human heart which, as Blondel showed, cannot be satisfied by anything within the order of nature.

In terms of the debates of the 1930s, John Paul II's positions differ from those of all the principal contestants. To the basic question whether there is such a thing as Christian philosophy he answers, against

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Bréhier and Van Steenberghen, that there is. Against Blondel, he holds that such philosophy is Christian in its substance and content, not simply in its orientation. Against Gilson, he holds that there can be a valid philosophy that is not influenced by revelation, and that the Christian philosopher need not be a theologian. And finally, against Maritain he contends that Christian philosophy can be practiced in a variety of styles, and is not necessarily Thomistic. On the whole, the Pope's positions coincide most closely with those of de Lubac, who sought to mediate between Blondel and Gilson.

Even if John Paul II had done nothing more than to sort out what is and is not acceptable in the earlier positions, his encyclical would be sufficient to establish a new state of the question. But he also takes a positive step forward. In *Fides et Ratio* and in several of his unofficial writings before and after he became Pope, he expresses his view that personalist anthropology must stand at the center of Christian philosophy today. The philosophy of consciousness, developed according to phenomenological method, can throw new light on the subjectivity of the person, which stands at the basis of culture, civilization, and politics. Biblical revelation has taught Christian philosophers such as Gabriel Marcel and Jewish philosophers such as Martin Buber and Emmanuel Lévinas that the whole of human existence is a coexistence in dialogue, and that the primary dialogue partner is the God of our faith.

Personalist phenomenology, practiced according to the principles of the Lublin school of Thomism, can contribute to a much needed renewal of metaphysics (83). The forms of metaphysics that were still flourishing in the 1930s are languishing today. The battle is no longer between Cartesian rationalists, German idealists, and Catholic neo-Scholastics. Many contemporary philosophers, proclaiming the "end of metaphysics" (55), are embracing agnosticism, relativism, and consequentialist pragmatism, or devoting their energies to purely formal questions concerning language and hermeneutics (5, 47, 81-82). Theology, for its part, all too often evades the challenge of truth. Falling into fideism or sheer positivism, many theologians limit themselves to sociological, linguistic, and historical studies of the Bible and Church teaching (48, 55, 61, 94). Both theology and philosophy are therefore in need of conversion. They must alike regain their sapiential dimension.

Fides et Ratio is a pressing appeal for faith and philosophy to "recover their profound unity which allows them to stand in harmony with their nature without compromising their mutual autonomy" (48). Once the distinction of goals and methods is in place, the intimate association between the two disciplines can be restored. Understood no longer as closed systems but as inquiries aimed at ultimate truth, they can be seen not as rivals or enemies, but as allies. The old debates about the turf belonging to each discipline and about their respective preeminence need not greatly trouble us today. The current need is for dialogue and mutual support.

Faith and reason, as described by John Paul II, are united like the two natures of Christ, which coexisted without confusion or alteration in a single person. Christian wisdom, similarly, involves a synthesis of theology and philosophy, each supporting and benefiting the other. The Pope also uses an analogy from Mariology: just as Mary, without impairment to her humanity, became fruitful by offering herself to the Word of God, so philosophy, he says, can become more fruitful by offering itself to the service of revealed truth (108).

Integral Christian wisdom, which sometimes goes by the name of philosophy or theology, draws on the full resources of reason and revelation alike. It is exemplified by the intellectual projects of Augustine, Bonaventure, and Thomas Aquinas, who sought to achieve a universal wisdom by synthesizing the totality of knowledge under the auspices of faith. Vatican II taught that "faith throws a new light on everything," thus making it possible for the believer to reflect not simply on the word of God but on the whole of life from the perspective of the word of God (*Gaudium et Spes* 11). In particular, the mystery of the human person takes on new meaning in the light of Christ, who is the key, the focal point, and the goal of all human history (*GS* 10).

Fides et Ratio begins with the statement that faith and reason are the two wings on which the human spirit soars to the contemplation of truth. The entire encyclical is an inspiring summons to the pursuit of a wisdom in which theology and philosophy are harmoniously integrated to the advantage of both and the detriment of neither.

The program set forth in the encyclical is radical and bold, especially in view of the troubled climate of the academic world today. Philosophers and theologians who wish to implement the Pope's vision must resolutely struggle against mighty odds. But a measure of success is attainable, especially in universities that stand within the Christian tradition. That success may also be a key element in John Paul II's strategy for the new evangelization. By reestablishing the harmony between faith and reason, it can help to prepare for the new springtime of faith that is envisaged as Christianity enters its third millennium. FT

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DNA and Other Designs

Stephen C. Meyer

For two millennia, the design argument provided an intellectual foundation for much of Western thought. From classical antiquity through the rise of modern science, leading philosophers, theologians, and scientists—from Plato to Aquinas to Newton—maintained that nature manifests the design of a preexistent mind or intelligence. Moreover, for many Western thinkers, the idea that the physical universe reflected the purpose or design of a preexistent mind—a Creator—served to guarantee humanity's own sense of purpose and meaning. Yet today in nearly every academic discipline from law to literary theory, from behavioral science to biology, a thoroughly materialistic understanding of humanity and its place in the universe has come to dominate. Free will, meaning, purpose, and God have become pejorative terms in the academy. Matter has subsumed mind; cosmos replaced Creator.

The reasons for this intellectual shift are no doubt complex. Yet clearly the demise of the design argument itself has played an important role in the loss of this traditional Western belief. Beginning in the Enlightenment, philosophers such as David Hume raised seemingly powerful objections against the design argument. Hume claimed that classical design arguments depended on a weak and flawed analogy between biological organisms and human artifacts. Yet for most, it was not the arguments of the philosophers that disposed of design, but the theories of scientists, particularly that of Charles Darwin. If the origin of biological organisms could be explained naturalistically, as Darwin claimed, then explanations invoking an intelligent designer were unnecessary and even vacuous. Indeed, as Richard Dawkins has put it, it was "Darwin [who] made it possible to be an intellectually fulfilled atheist."

Thus, since the late nineteenth century most biologists have rejected the idea that living organisms display evidence of intelligent design. While many acknowledge the *appearance* of design in biological systems, they insist that Darwinism, or neo-Darwinism, explains how this appearance arose naturalistically—that is, without invoking a directing intelligence or agency. Following Darwin, modern neo-Darwinists generally accept that natural selection acting on random variation can explain the appearance of design in living organisms.

Yet however one assesses the explanatory power of Darwinism (or modern neo-Darwinism), the appearance of design in at least one important domain of biology cannot be so easily dismissed. During the last half of the twentieth century, advances in molecular biology and biochemistry have revolutionized our understanding of the miniature world within the cell. Research has revealed that cells—the fundamental units of life—store, transmit, and edit information and use that information to regulate their most fundamental metabolic processes. Far from characterizing cells as simple "homogeneous globules of plasm" as did Ernst Haeckel and other nineteenth-century biologists, biologists now describe cells as, among other things, "distributive real time computers" or complex information processing systems.

Darwin, of course, neither knew about these intricacies nor sought to explain their origin. Instead, his theory of biological evolution sought to explain how life could have grown gradually more complex *starting* from "one or a few simple forms." Strictly speaking, therefore, those who insist that the purely naturalistic

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Darwinian mechanism can explain the appearance of design in biology overstate their case. The complexities within the microcosm of the cell beg for some kind of explanation. Yet they lie beyond the purview of strictly biological evolutionary theory, which assumes, rather than explains, the existence of the first life and the information it required.

Darwin's theory sought to explain the origin of new forms of life from simpler forms. It did not explain how the first life—presumably a simple cell—might have arisen in the first place. Nevertheless, in the 1870s and 1880s scientists assumed that devising an explanation for the origin of life would be fairly easy. For one thing, they assumed that life was essentially a rather simple substance called protoplasm that could be easily constructed by combining and recombining simple chemicals such as carbon dioxide, oxygen, and nitrogen. Early theories of life's origin reflected this view. Haeckel likened cell "autogeny," as he called it, to the process of inorganic crystallization. Haeckel's English counterpart, T. H. Huxley, proposed a simple two-step method of chemical recombination to explain the origin of the first cell. Just as salt could be produced spontaneously by adding sodium to chloride, so, thought Haeckel and Huxley, could a living cell be produced by adding together several chemical constituents and then allowing spontaneous chemical reactions to produce the simple protoplasmic substance that they assumed to be the essence of life.

During the 1920s and 1930s a more sophisticated version of this so-called "chemical evolutionary theory" was proposed by a Russian biochemist named Alexander I. Oparin. Oparin had a much more accurate understanding than his predecessors of the complexity of cellular metabolism, but neither he nor any one else at the time fully appreciated the complexity of the molecules such as protein and DNA that make life possible. Oparin, like his nineteenth-century predecessors, suggested that life could have first evolved as the result of a series of chemical reactions. Unlike his predecessors, however, he envisioned that this process of chemical evolution would involve many more chemical transformations and reactions and many hundreds of millions (or even billions) of years.

The first experimental support for Oparin's hypothesis came in December 1952. While doing graduate work under Harold Urey at the University of Chicago, Stanley Miller circulated a gaseous mixture of methane, ammonia, water vapor, and hydrogen through a glass vessel containing an electrical discharge chamber. Miller sent a high voltage charge of electricity into the chamber via tungsten filaments in an attempt to simulate the effects of ultraviolet light on prebiotic atmospheric gases. After two days, Miller found a small (2 percent) yield of amino acids in the U-shaped water trap he used to collect reaction products at the bottom of the vessel.

Miller's success in producing biologically relevant "building blocks" under ostensibly prebiotic conditions was heralded as a great breakthrough. His experiment seemed to provide experimental support for Oparin's chemical evolutionary theory by showing that an important step in Oparin's scenario—the production of biological building blocks from simpler atmospheric gases—was possible on the early earth. Miller's experimental results gave Oparin's model the status of textbook orthodoxy almost overnight. Thanks largely to Miller, chemical evolution is now routinely presented in both high school and college biology textbooks as the accepted scientific explanation for the origin of life.

Yet as we shall see, chemical evolutionary theory is now known to be riddled with difficulties; and Miller's work is understood by the origin-of-life research community itself to have little if any relevance to explaining how amino acids—let alone proteins or living cells—actually could have arisen on the early earth.

When Miller conducted his experiment, he presupposed that the earth's atmosphere was composed of a mixture of what chemists call "reducing gases" such as methane, ammonia, and hydrogen. He also assumed that the earth's atmosphere contained virtually no free oxygen. In the years following Miller's experiment, however, new geochemical evidence made it clear that the assumptions that Oparin and Miller had made about the early atmosphere could not be justified.

Instead, evidence strongly suggested that neutral gases—not methane, ammonia, and hydrogen—predominated in the early atmosphere. Moreover, a number of geochemical studies showed that significant amounts of free oxygen were also present even before the advent of plant life, probably as the result of volcanic outgassing and the photodissociation of water vapor. In a chemically neutral atmosphere, reactions among atmospheric gases will not readily take place. Moreover, even a small amount of atmospheric oxygen will quench the production of biological building blocks and cause any biomolecules otherwise present to degrade rapidly.

As had been well known even before Miller's experiment, amino acids will form readily in an appropriate mixture of reducing gases. What made Miller's experiment significant was not the production of amino acids per se, but their production from ostensibly plausible prebiotic conditions. As Miller himself stated, "In this apparatus an attempt was made to dupli-

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cate a primitive atmosphere of the earth, and not to obtain the optimum conditions for the formation of amino acids." Now, however, the only reason to continue assuming the existence of a chemically reducing, prebiotic atmosphere is that chemical evolutionary theory requires it.

Ironically, even if we assume for the moment that the reducing gases used by Stanley Miller do actually simulate conditions on the early earth, his experiments inadvertently demonstrated the necessity of intelligent agency. Even successful simulation experiments require the intervention of the experimenters to prevent what are known as "interfering cross reactions" and other chemically destructive processes. Without human intervention, experiments like that performed by Miller invariably produce nonbiological substances that degrade amino acids into nonbiologically relevant compounds.

Experimenters prevent this by removing chemical products that induce undesirable cross reactions. They employ other "unnatural" interventions as well. Simulation experimenters have typically used only short wavelength light, rather than both short and long wavelength ultraviolet light, which would be present in any realistic atmosphere. Why? The presence of the long wavelength UV light quickly degrades amino acids.

Such manipulations constitute what chemist Michael Polanyi called a "profoundly informative intervention." They seem to "simulate," if anything, the need for an intelligent agent to overcome the randomizing influences of natural chemical processes.

Yet a more fundamental problem remains for all chemical evolutionary scenarios. Even if it could be demonstrated that the building blocks of essential molecules could arise in realistic prebiotic conditions, the problem of assembling those building blocks into functioning proteins or DNA chains would remain.

To form a protein, amino acids must link together to form a chain. Yet amino acids form functioning proteins only when they adopt very specific sequential arrangements, rather like properly sequenced letters in an English sentence. Thus, amino acids alone do not make proteins, any more than letters alone make words, sentences, or poetry. In both cases, the sequencing of the constituent parts determines the function (or lack of function) of the whole. Explaining the origin of the specific sequencing of proteins (and DNA) lies at the heart of the current crisis in materialistic evolutionary thinking.

Biologists from Darwin's time to the late 1930s assumed that the secret of protein function derived from some kind of simple, regular structure explicable by reference to mathematical laws. Beginning in the 1950s, however, biologists made a series of discoveries that caused this simplistic view of proteins to change. In the early 1950s, molecular biologist Fred Sanger determined the structure of the protein molecule insulin. Sanger's work showed that proteins are made of long and irregularly arranged sequences of amino acids, rather like an irregularly arranged string of colored beads. Later in the 1950s, work by Andrew Kendrew on the structure of the protein myoglobin showed that proteins also exhibit a surprising three-dimensional complexity. Far from the simple structures that biologists had imagined, Kendrew's work revealed an extraordinarily complex and irregular three-dimensional shape—a twisting, turning, tangled chain of amino acids.

During the 1950s scientists quickly realized that proteins possess another remarkable property. In addition to their complexity, they also exhibit specificity. Whereas proteins are built from rather simple chemical building blocks known as amino acids, their function (whether as enzymes, signal transducers, or structural components in the cell) depends crucially upon the complex but specific sequencing of these building blocks—and slight alterations in sequencing can quickly result in loss of function.

The specific sequencing of amino acids in proteins gives rise to specific three-dimensional structures. This structure or shape in turn determines what function, if any, the amino acid chain can perform within the cell. For a functioning protein, its three-dimensional shape gives it a "hand-in-glove" fit with other molecules in the cell, enabling it to catalyze specific chemical reactions or to build specific structures within the cell. Because of this specificity, one protein can usually no more substitute for another than one tool can substitute for another. A topoisomerase can no more perform the job of a polymerase than a hatchet can perform the function of a soldering iron. Proteins can perform functions only by virtue of their three-dimensional specificity of fit with other equally specified and complex molecules within the cell. This three-dimensional specificity derives in turn from a one-dimensional specificity of sequencing in the arrangement of the amino acids that form proteins.

How did such complex, but specific, structures arise in the cell? This question recurred with particular urgency after Sanger revealed his results in the early 1950s. Proteins seemed too complex and functionally specified to arise by chance. Moreover, given their irregularity, it seemed unlikely that a general chemical law or regularity governed their assembly. Instead, as Jacques Monod has recalled, molecular biologists began to look for some source of information within the cell that could direct the construction

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of these highly specific structures. To explain the presence of all that information in the protein, Monod would later explain, "You absolutely needed a code."

In 1953, James Watson and Francis Crick elucidated the structure of the DNA molecule. Soon thereafter, molecular biologists discovered how DNA stores the information necessary to direct protein synthesis. In 1955 Francis Crick first proposed the "sequence hypothesis" suggesting that the specificity of amino acids in proteins derives from the specific arrangement of chemical constituents in the DNA molecule. According to the sequence hypothesis, information on the DNA molecule is stored in the form of specifically arranged chemicals called nucleotide bases along the spine of DNA's helical strands. Chemists represent these four nucleotides with the letters A, T, G, and C (for adenine, thymine, guanine, and cytosine). By 1961, the sequence hypothesis had become part of the so-called "central dogma" of molecular biology as a series of brilliant experiments confirmed DNA's information-bearing properties.

As it turns out, specific regions of the DNA molecule called coding regions have the same property of "sequence specificity" or "specified complexity" that characterizes written codes, linguistic texts, and protein molecules. Just as the letters in the alphabet of a written language may convey a particular message depending on their arrangement, so too do the sequences of nucleotide bases (the A's, T's, G's, and C's) inscribed along the spine of a DNA molecule convey a precise set of instructions for building proteins within the cell. The nucleotide bases in DNA function in precisely the same way as symbols in a machine code. In each case, the arrangement of the characters determines the function of the sequence as a whole. As Richard Dawkins has noted, "The machine code of the genes is uncannily computer-like." In the case of a computer code, the specific arrangement of just two symbols (0 and 1) suffices to carry information. In the case of DNA, the complex but precise sequencing of the four nucleotide bases (A, T, G, and C) stores and transmits the information necessary to build proteins. Thus, the sequence specificity of proteins derives from a prior sequence specificity—from the *information*—encoded in DNA.

The elucidation of DNA's information-bearing properties raised the question of the ultimate origin of the information in both DNA and proteins. Indeed, many scientists now refer to the information problem as the "Holy Grail" of origin-of-life biology. As Bernd-Olaf Kuppers recently stated, "The problem of the origin of life is clearly basically equivalent to the problem of the origin of biological information." Since the 1950s, three broad types of naturalistic explanation have been proposed by scientists to explain the origin of information: chance, prebiotic natural selection, and chemical necessity.

While many outside origin-of-life biology may still invoke "chance" as a causal explanation for the origin of biological information, few serious researchers still do. Since molecular biologists began to appreciate the sequence specificity of proteins and nucleic acids in the 1950s and 1960s, many calculations have been made to determine the probability of formulating functional proteins and nucleic acids at random. Even assuming extremely favorable prebiotic conditions and theoretically maximal reaction rates, such calculations have invariably shown that the probability of obtaining functionally sequenced biomacromolecules at random is, in Ilya Prigogine's words, "vanishingly small . . . even on the scale of . . . billions of years."

Consider the hurdles that must be overcome to construct even one short protein molecule of about one hundred amino acids in length. First, all amino acids must form a chemical bond known as a peptide bond so as to join with other amino acids in the protein chain. Yet in nature many types of chemical bonds are possible between amino acids, only about half of which are peptide bonds. The probability of building a chain of one hundred amino acids in which all linkages involve peptide bonds is roughly $(1/2)^{99}$ or 1 chance in 10^{30}.

Second, in nature every amino acid has a distinct mirror image of itself, one left-handed version or L-form and one right-handed version or D-form. These mirror-image forms are called optical isomers. Functioning proteins tolerate only left-handed amino acids, yet the right-handed and left-handed isomers occur in nature with roughly equal frequency. Taking this into consideration compounds the improbability of attaining a biologically functioning protein. The probability of attaining at random only L-amino acids in a hypothetical peptide chain one hundred amino acids long is $(1/2)^{100}$ or again roughly 1 chance in 10^{30}.

Third and most important of all: functioning proteins must have amino acids that link up in a specific sequential arrangement, just as the letters in a meaningful sentence do. Because there are twenty biologically occurring amino acids, the probability of getting a specific amino acid at a given site is 1/20. Even if we assume that some sites along the chain will tolerate several amino acids, we find that the probability of achieving a functional sequence of amino acids in several functioning proteins at random is still "vanishingly small," roughly 1 chance in 10^{65}—an astronomically large number—for a protein one hundred amino acids in length. (Actually the probability is even lower because there are many non-proteinous

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amino acids in nature that we have not accounted for in this calculation.)

If one also factors in the probability of attaining proper bonding and optical isomers, the probability of constructing a rather short, functional protein at random becomes so small (1 chance in 10^{125}) as to approach the point at which appeals to chance become absurd even given the "probabilistic resources" of our multi-billion-year-old universe. Consider further that equally severe probabilistic difficulties attend the random assembly of functional DNA. Moreover, a minimally complex cell requires not one, but roughly one hundred complex proteins (and many other biomolecular components such as DNA and RNA) all functioning in close coordination. For this reason, quantitative assessments of cellular complexity have simply reinforced an opinion that has prevailed since the mid-1960s within origin-of-life biology: chance is not an adequate explanation for the origin of biological complexity and specificity.

At nearly the same time that many researchers became disenchanted with "chance" explanations, theories of prebiotic natural selection also fell out of favor. Such theories allegedly overcome the difficulties of pure chance by providing a mechanism by which complexity-increasing events in the cell might be preserved and selected. Yet these theories share many of the difficulties that afflict purely chance-based theories.

Natural selection presupposes a preexisting mechanism of self-replication. Yet self-replication in all extant cells depends upon functional (and, therefore, to a high degree sequence-specific) proteins and nucleic acids. But the origin of these molecules is precisely what Oparin needed to explain. Thus, many rejected his postulation of prebiotic natural selection as question begging. As the evolutionary biologist Theodosius Dobzhansky would insist, "Prebiological natural selection is a contradiction in terms."

Further, natural selection can select only what chance has first produced, and chance, at least in a prebiotic setting, seems an implausible agent for producing the information present in even a single functioning protein or DNA molecule. As Christian de Duve has explained, theories of prebiotic natural selection "need information which implies they have to presuppose what is to be explained in the first place." For this reason, most scientists now dismiss appeals to prebiotic natural selection as essentially indistinguishable from appeals to chance.

Because of these difficulties, many origin-of-life theorists after the mid-1960s attempted to address the problem of the origin of biological information in a completely new way. Rather than invoking prebiotic natural selection or "frozen accidents," many theorists suggested that the laws of nature and chemical attraction may themselves be responsible for the information in DNA and proteins. Some have suggested that simple chemicals might possess "self-ordering properties" capable of organizing the constituent parts of proteins, DNA, and RNA into the specific arrangements they now possess. Just as electrostatic forces draw sodium (Na+) and chloride ions (Cl-) together into highly ordered patterns within a crystal of salt (NaCl), so too might amino acids with special affinities for each other arrange themselves to form proteins.

In 1977, Prigogine and Gregorie Nicolis proposed another theory of self-organization based on their observation that open systems driven far from equilibrium often display self-ordering tendencies. For example, gravitational energy will produce highly ordered vortices in a draining bathtub, and thermal energy flowing through a heat sink will generate distinctive convection currents or "spiral wave activity."

For many current origin-of-life scientists, self-organizational models now seem to offer the most promising approach to explaining the origin of biological information. Nevertheless, critics have called into question both the plausibility and the relevance of self-organizational models. Ironically, perhaps the most prominent early advocate of self-organization, Dean Kenyon, has now explicitly repudiated such theories as both incompatible with empirical findings and theoretically incoherent.

The empirical difficulties that attend self-organizational scenarios can be illustrated by examining a DNA molecule. The diagram opposite shows that the structure of DNA depends upon several chemical bonds. There are bonds, for example, between the sugar and the phosphate molecules that form the two twisting backbones of the DNA molecule. There are bonds fixing individual (nucleotide) bases to the sugar-phosphate backbones on each side of the molecule. Notice that there are no chemical bonds between the bases that run along the spine of the helix. Yet it is precisely along this axis of the molecule that the genetic instructions in DNA are encoded.

Further, just as magnetic letters can be combined and recombined in any way to form various sequences on a metal surface, so too can each of the four bases A, T, G, and C attach to any site on the DNA backbone with equal facility, making all sequences equally probable (or improbable). The same type of chemical bond occurs between the bases and the backbone regardless of which base attaches. All four bases are acceptable; none is preferred. In other words, differential bonding affinities do not account for the sequencing of the bases. Because these same facts

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hold for RNA molecules, researchers who speculate that life began in an "RNA world" have also failed to solve the sequencing problem—i.e., the problem of explaining how information present in all functioning RNA molecules could have arisen in the first place.

For those who want to explain the origin of life as the result of self-organizing properties intrinsic to the material constituents of living systems, these rather elementary facts of molecular biology have devastating implications. The most logical place to look for self-organizing properties to explain the origin of genetic information is in the constituent parts of the molecules carrying that information. But biochemistry and molecular biology make clear that the forces of attraction between the constituents in DNA, RNA, and protein do not explain the sequence specificity of these large information-bearing biomolecules.

Significantly, information theorists insist that there is a good reason for this. If chemical affinities between the constituents in the DNA message text determined the arrangement of the text, such affinities would dramatically diminish the capacity of DNA to carry information. Consider what would happen if the individual nucleotide "letters" in a DNA molecule *did* interact by chemical necessity with each other. Every time adenine (A) occurred in a growing genetic sequence, it would likely drag thymine (T) along with it. Every time cytosine (C) appeared, guanine (G) would follow. As a result, the DNA message text would be peppered with repeating sequences of A's followed by T's and C's followed by G's.

Rather than having a genetic molecule capable of unlimited novelty, with all the unpredictable and aperiodic sequences that characterize informative texts, we would have a highly repetitive text awash in redundant sequences—much as happens in crystals. Indeed, in a crystal the forces of mutual chemical attraction do completely explain the sequential ordering of the constituent parts, and consequently crystals cannot convey novel information. Sequencing in crystals is repetitive and highly ordered, but not informative. Once one has seen "Na" followed by "Cl" in a crystal of salt, for example, one has seen the extent of the sequencing possible. Bonding affinities, to the extent they exist, mitigate against the maximization of information. They cannot, therefore, be used to explain the origin of information. Affinities create mantras, not messages.

The tendency to confuse the qualitative distinction between "order" and "information" has characterized self-organizational research efforts and calls into question the relevance of such work to the origin of life. Self-organizational theorists explain well what doesn't need explaining. What needs explaining is not the origin of order (whether in the form of crystals, swirling tornadoes, or the "eyes" of hurricanes), but the origin of *information*—the highly improbable, aperiodic, and yet specified sequences that make biologi-

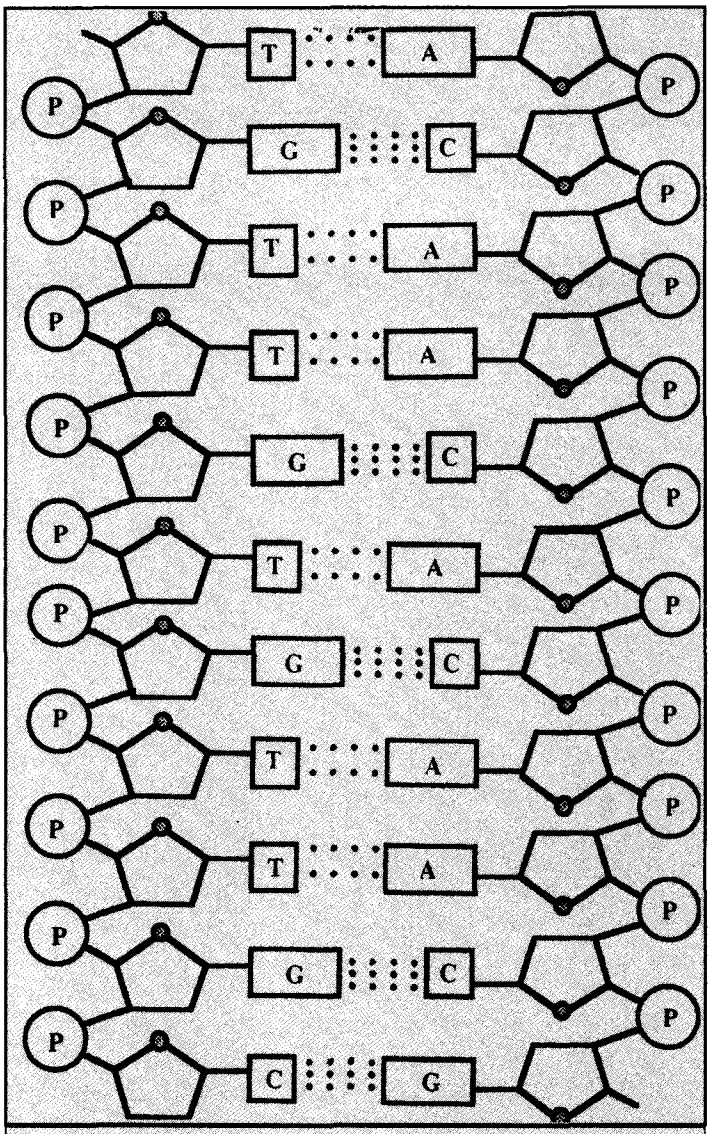

Figure: *The bonding relationships between the chemical constituents of the DNA molecule. Sugars (designated by the pentagons) and phosphates (designated by the circled P's) are linked chemically. Nucleotide bases (the A's, T's, G's, and C's) are bonded to the sugar-phosphate backbones. Nucleotide bases are linked by hydrogen bonds (designated by double or triple lines) across the double helix. But no chemical bonds exist between the nucleotide bases along the message-bearing spine of the helix, demonstrating that physical and chemical forces are not responsible for the specific sequencing in the molecule.*

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cal function possible.

To see the distinction between order and information, compare the sequence "ABABABABABABAB" to the sequence "Time and tide wait for no man." The first sequence is repetitive and ordered, but not complex or informative. Systems that are characterized by both specificity and complexity (what information theorists call "specified complexity") have "information content." Since such systems have the qualitative feature of aperiodicity or complexity, they are qualitatively distinguishable from systems characterized by simple periodic order. Thus, attempts to explain the origin of order have no relevance to discussions of the origin of information content. Significantly, the nucleotide sequences in the coding regions of DNA have, by all accounts, a high information content—that is, they are both highly specified and complex, just like meaningful English sentences or functional lines of code in computer software.

Yet the information contained in an English sentence or computer software does not derive from the chemistry of the ink or the physics of magnetism, but from a source extrinsic to physics and chemistry altogether. Indeed, in both cases, the message transcends the properties of the medium. The information in DNA also transcends the properties of its material medium. Because chemical bonds do not determine the arrangement of nucleotide bases, the nucleotides can assume a vast array of possible sequences and thereby express many different biochemical messages.

If the properties of matter (i.e., the medium) do not suffice to explain the origin of information, what does? Our experience with information-intensive systems (especially codes and languages) indicates that such systems always come from an intelligent source—i.e., from mental or personal agents, not chance or material necessity. This generalization about the cause of information has, ironically, received confirmation from origin-of-life research itself. During the last forty years, every naturalistic model proposed has failed to explain the origin of information—the great stumbling block for materialistic scenarios. Thus, mind or intelligence or what philosophers call "agent causation" now stands as the only cause known to be capable of creating an information-rich system, including the coding regions of DNA, functional proteins, and the cell as a whole.

Because mind or intelligent design is a necessary cause of an informative system, one can detect the past action of an intelligent cause from the presence of an information-intensive effect, even if the cause itself cannot be directly observed. Since information requires an intelligent source, the flowers spelling "Welcome to Victoria" in the gardens of Victoria harbor in Canada lead visitors to infer the activity of intelligent agents even if they did not see the flowers planted and arranged.

Scientists in many fields now recognize the connection between intelligence and information and make inferences accordingly. Archaeologists assume a mind produced the inscriptions on the Rosetta Stone. SETI's search for extraterrestrial intelligence presupposes that the presence of information imbedded in electromagnetic signals from space would indicate an intelligent source. As yet, radio astronomers have not found information-bearing signals coming from space. But molecular biologists, looking closer to home, have discovered information in the cell. Consequently, DNA justifies making what probability theorist William A. Dembski calls "the design inference."

Of course, many scientists have argued that to infer design gives up on science. They say that inferring design constitutes an argument from scientific ignorance—a "God of the Gaps" fallacy. Since science doesn't yet know how biological information could have arisen, design theorists invoke a mysterious notion—intelligent design—to fill a gap in scientific knowledge. Many philosophers, for their part, resist reconsidering design, because they assume that Hume's objections to analogical reasoning in classical design arguments still have force.

Yet developments in philosophy of science and the information sciences provide the grounds for a decisive refutation of both these objections. First, contemporary design theory does not constitute an argument from ignorance. Design theorists infer design not just because natural processes cannot explain the origin of biological systems, but because these systems manifest the distinctive hallmarks of intelligently designed systems—that is, they possess features that in any other realm of experience would trigger the recognition of an intelligent cause. For example, in his book *Darwin's Black Box* (1996), Michael Behe has inferred design not only because the gradualistic mechanism of natural selection cannot produce "irreducibly complex" systems, but also because in our experience "irreducible complexity" is a feature of systems known to have been intelligently designed. That is, whenever we see systems that have the feature of irreducible complexity and we know the causal story about how such systems originated, invariably "intelligent design" played a role in the origin of such systems. Thus, Behe infers intelligent design as the best explanation for the origin of irreducible complexity in cellular molecular motors, for example, based upon what we *know*, not what we don't know, about the causal powers of nature and intelligent

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agents, respectively.

Similarly, the "sequence specificity" or "specificity and complexity" or "information content" of DNA suggests a prior intelligent cause, again because "specificity and complexity" or "high information content" constitutes a distinctive hallmark (or signature) of intelligence. Indeed, in all cases where we know the causal origin of "high information content," experience has shown that intelligent design played a causal role.

Design theorists infer a past intelligent cause based upon present knowledge of cause and effect relationships. Inferences to design thus employ the standard uniformitarian method of reasoning used in all historical sciences, many of which routinely detect intelligent causes. We would not say, for example, that an archeologist had committed a "scribe of the gaps" fallacy simply because he inferred that an intelligent agent had produced an ancient hieroglyphic inscription. Instead, we recognize that the archeologist has made an inference based upon the *presence* of a feature (namely, "high information content") that invariably implicates an intelligent cause, not (solely) upon the *absence* of evidence for a suitably efficacious natural cause.

Second, contra the classical Humean objection to design, the "DNA to Design" argument does not depend upon an analogy between the features of human artifacts and living systems, still less upon a weak or illicit one. If, as Bill Gates has said, "DNA is similar to a software program" but more complex, it makes sense, *on analogical grounds*, to consider inferring that it too had an intelligent source.

Nevertheless, while DNA is similar to a computer program, the case for its design does not depend merely upon resemblance or analogical reasoning. Classical design arguments in biology typically sought to draw analogies between whole organisms and machines based upon certain similar features that each held in common. These arguments sought to reason from similar effects back to similar causes. The status of such design arguments thus turned on the degree of similarity that actually obtained between the effects in question. Yet since even advocates of these classical arguments admitted dissimilarities as well as similarities, the status of these arguments always appeared uncertain. Advocates would argue that the similarities between organisms and machines outweighed dissimilarities. Critics would claim the opposite.

The design argument from the information in DNA does not depend upon such analogical reasoning since it does not depend upon claims of similarity. As noted above, the coding regions of DNA have the very same property of "specified complexity" or "information content" that computer codes and linguistic texts do. Though DNA does not possess all the properties of natural languages or "semantic information"—i.e., information that is subjectively "meaningful" to human agents—it does have precisely those properties that jointly implicate an antecedent intelligence.

As William A. Dembski has shown in his recent book *The Design Inference* (1998), systems or sequences that have the joint properties of "high complexity and specification" invariably result from intelligent causes, not chance or physical-chemical necessity. Complex sequences are those that exhibit an irregular and improbable arrangement that defies expression by a simple rule or algorithm. A specification, on the other hand, is a match or correspondence between a physical system or sequence and a set of independent functional requirements or constraints. As it turns out, the base sequences in the coding regions of DNA are both highly complex and specified. The sequences of bases in DNA are highly irregular, non-repetitive, and improbable—therefore, complex. Moreover, the coding regions of DNA exhibit sequential arrangements of bases that are necessary (within certain fine tolerances) to produce functional proteins—that is, they are highly specified with respect to the independent requirements of protein function and protein synthesis. Thus, as nearly all molecular biologists now recognize, the coding regions of DNA possess a high "information content"—where "information content" in a biological context means precisely "complexity and specificity."

The design argument from information content in DNA, therefore, does not depend upon analogical reasoning since it does not depend upon assessments of degree of similarity. The argument does not depend upon the similarity of DNA to a computer program or human language, but upon the presence of an identical feature ("information content" defined as "complexity and specification") in both DNA and all other designed systems, languages, or artifacts. While a computer program may be similar to DNA in many respects, and dissimilar in others, it exhibits a precise identity to DNA in its ability to store information content (as just defined).

Thus, the "DNA to Design" argument does not represent an argument from analogy of the sort that Hume criticized, but an "inference to the best explanation." Such arguments turn, not on assessments of the degree of similarity between effects, but instead on an assessment of the adequacy of competing possible causes for the same effect. Because we know intelligent agents can (and do) produce complex and functionally specified sequences of symbols and

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arrangements of matter (i.e., information content), intelligent agency qualifies as a sufficient causal explanation for the origin of this effect. Since, in addition, naturalistic scenarios have proven universally inadequate for explaining the origin of information content, mind or creative intelligence now stands as the best and only entity with the causal power to produce this feature of living systems.

For almost 150 years many scientists have insisted that "chance and necessity"—happenstance and law—jointly suffice to explain the origin of life on earth. We now find, however, that orthodox evolutionary thinking—with its reliance upon these twin pillars of materialistic thought—has failed to explain the specificity and complexity of the cell. Even so, many scientists insist that to consider another possibility would constitute a departure from science, from reason itself.

Yet ordinary reason, and much scientific reasoning that passes under the scrutiny of materialist sanction, not only recognizes but requires us to recognize the causal activity of intelligent agents. The sculptures of Michaelangelo, the software of the Microsoft corporation, the inscribed steles of Assyrian kings—each bespeaks the prior action of an intelligent agent. Indeed, everywhere in our high-tech environment we observe complex events, artifacts, and systems that impel our minds to recognize the activity of other minds—minds that communicate, plan, and design. But to detect the presence of mind, to detect the activity of intelligence in the echo of its effects, requires a mode of reasoning—indeed, a form of knowledge—the existence of which science, or at least official biology, has long excluded. Yet recent developments in the information sciences and within biology itself now imply the need to rehabilitate this lost way of knowing. As we do so, we may find that we have also restored some of the intellectual underpinning of traditional Western metaphysics and theistic belief. FT

Night

The house is silent in the night
As if all sounds have burrowed deep
Or fearing dark have taken flight
And closed loud eyes to mimic sleep.

The children dream in murmured breaths
By talking so (deep breaths to each)
They in their chatty, wakeful deaths
New life with every word beseech.

The late hour swells with pregnant dark
And phantoms of unsurfaced things,
In sleep's forgetting they embark
The troubled passage which night brings.

That's why we stay to talk or write
In secret knowing we but keep
A vigil by some fire's light
To linger at the door of sleep.

Michael Karounos

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A Conversion Story

Elizabeth Fox-Genovese

An adult conversion to Catholicism—or indeed to any form of orthodox Christianity—is not an everyday occurrence in the American academy. Most secular academics seem to receive any profession of Christian faith with a vague sense of embarrassment. Adherence to Judaism or Islam is another matter, although why is not immediately self-evident, since both impose stringent demands upon their faithful. Perhaps they meet with greater tolerance because they are less familiar, perhaps because, whatever the reality, they do not carry Christianity's taint of having long figured as the religion of a male European elite that allegedly used its faith to cow others into submission. Nor does it change anything to remind skeptics that, in the United States, Catholics long suffered a discrimination that was, in its way, almost as implacable as that suffered by black Americans. A vague, nondenominational Christianity—or, better yet, Unitarianism—may be acceptable, but Catholicism lies beyond the pale. Catholicism is not something that people "like us" embrace.

Thus when, in December 1995, I was received into the Catholic Church, my nonbelieving colleagues tactfully refrained from comment, primarily, I suspect, because they literally did not know what to say. More likely than not, many of them assumed that, having lived through some difficult years, I was turning to faith for some form of irrational consolation. Consequently, from their perspective, to acknowledge my conversion would, implicitly, have been to acknowledge my vulnerability. Others, who were less sympathetic, doubtless assumed that my turn to Rome reflected what they viewed as my reactionary politics, notably with respect to abortion. From their perspective, I had exiled myself from acceptable conversation of any kind.

I have no intention of berating my colleagues or other secular academics, but rather to call attention to aspects of the prevailing secular mindset that make the idea of conversion virtually incomprehensible. For secular academics, the language and practice of faith belong to an alien world. Not understanding faith, they are ill prepared to understand conversion to it. Having long participated in the reigning discourse of secular intellectuals, I understand all too well where they are coming from, and I readily acknowledge that indeed "there but for the grace of God go I." More important, however, my long apprenticeship in their world allows me to reflect upon their unreflective assumptions, for those assumptions cut a broad swath through our culture as a whole, challenging faith at every turn. So firm is their hold upon our culture that they are imperceptibly permeating the fabric of faith itself, constantly challenging the faithful to justify and rejustify our beliefs.

Believers, in sharp contrast to nonbelievers, welcome conversion stories as heartening evidence of God's grace and the workings of the Holy Spirit. The conversion of a secular intellectual in particular seems to snatch a soul from the very jaws of feminism, communism, nihilism, atheism, or some other fashionable secular ideology. Given the broad gap between belief and nonbelief that both sides perceive, it is not surprising that both hostile and sympathetic observers expect conversion stories to be dramatic. Like St. Paul on the road to Damascus, the convert is generally expected to have experienced a moment of blinding illumination followed by a radical change of life. This expectation testifies to a widespread sense that the

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tenets of faith and those of the world, of Jerusalem and of Athens, are in conflict. While emphatically not disputing the significance of the deep differences between the views and attitudes of believers and those of nonbelievers, I did not myself experience conversion as a radical rupture with my past. This is not to say that I did not experience the journey to belief as what my students call "life-changing": in essential ways, I did. Nonetheless, in other ways I did not. In many respects, my conversion fit neatly—almost seamlessly—into the continuum of my life, and, from this perspective, it was a natural stage in the journey rather than a new departure.

For practical purposes, I grew up a nonbelieving Christian. Wait a minute, you may fairly protest, is that not an oxymoron? How can a nonbeliever describe herself as Christian if faith constitutes the essence of Christianity? Time and again throughout the Gospels, Jesus evokes belief in himself and the Father who sent him as the only test or standard. Think of Martha at the time of Lazarus' death: "Yes, Lord; I believe that you are the Christ, the Son of God, he who is coming into the world" (John 10:27). And Martha is not alone. Time and again petitioners receive what they seek because Jesus fulfills their belief. As he tells Martha, "I am the resurrection and the life; he who believes in me, though he die, yet shall he live, and whoever lives and believes in me shall never die" (John 10:25-26). A Christian, by definition, is one who accepts Jesus Christ as his personal savior and, no less important, as Lord. Everything depends upon belief.

The story of modernity has arguably been one of the marginalization and discrediting of belief, or, perhaps more accurately, its relegation to the realm of radical subjectivity. Modernity, in other words, has systematically divorced faith from moral and intellectual authority. Until well into the twentieth century, however, the mounting assaults on faith did not entirely erase the living legacy of Christianity from Western culture. If nothing else, the moral teachings of the Decalogue and the Sermon on the Mount continued to receive a measure of respect—in exhortation if not uniformly in observance. My early years conformed precisely to this pattern, especially with respect to the Decalogue, which my parents took with utmost seriousness. In retrospect, it seems to me that my father especially never doubted the truth of Dostoevsky's troubling question: "If God is dead, is not everything permitted?" Yet neither he nor my mother was a believer, and neither taught us to believe. Like many other honorable and upright modernists, they apparently grounded their strong sense of morality in the integrity of the individual.

Throughout my non-churchgoing, nonbelieving adult years, I had always considered myself a Christian in the amorphous cultural sense of the world. Having been reared on the Bible and Protestant hymns, I was conversant with the language and basic tenets of Christianity. I had, moreover, been reared with a deep respect for the great Hebrew prophets, assorted Protestant leaders and Catholic saints, and even the unique value of Jesus Christ as the preeminent exemplar of loving self-sacrifice. Never, I am grateful to say, did I, like too many secular intellectuals, denigrate or disdain believing Christians, whom I had always been inclined to regard with respect. But for long years, I did not give much thought to joining their number. By the time I had completed college and then graduate school, I had so thoroughly imbibed materialist philosophy that it did not occur to me to look beyond it. My quests, such as they were, focused upon the claims and contours of moral worthiness in a world that took it as a matter of faith that "God is dead."

Over the years, my concerns about morality deepened, and my reflections invariably pointed to the apparently irrefutable conclusion that morality was, by its very nature, authoritarian. Morality, in other words, drew the dividing line between good and bad. During the years of my reflection, however, the secular world was rapidly promoting the belief that moral conviction, like any other idea, expressed the standpoint of the person who enunciated it. And it was becoming a widely shared belief that there were as many moralities as there were people and that it was inappropriate to impose one's own morality on another whose situation one could not fully understand. Although as predisposed as any to respect the claims of difference, whether of sex, class, or culture, I increasingly found this moral relativism troubling. It seemed difficult to imagine a world in which each followed his or her personal moral compass, if only because the morality of some was bound, sooner or later, to clash with the morality of others. And without some semblance of a common standard, those clashes were more than likely to end in one or another form of violence.

My more wrenching concerns, however, lay elsewhere. Thinking and writing about abortion had led me to an ever greater appreciation for the claims of life, which were so often buried beneath impassioned defenses of a woman's right to self-determination, especially her right to sexual freedom. When I began to think seriously about the issue, my commitment to women's right to develop their talents predisposed me to support the legality of abortion, at least up to a certain point. Even then, I found it impossible not to take seriously the life of the fetus that was being so casually

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cast aside. The emerging discussions of assisted suicide only intensified my discomfort, as I found myself worrying about one human being deciding whether another's life is worth living. "How do we know?" I kept asking myself. "How ever can we know?"

Today, it is easy to see that I was instinctively revolting against a utilitarian or instrumentalist understanding of the value of human life. For I did understand that as soon as we admit as a serious consideration whether our obligations to others are inconvenient, the value of any life becomes negotiable. At this point, as you will note, my internal struggles still unfolded within a secular framework, although I fully appreciated that devout Christians and Jews viewed reverence for life in its most vulnerable forms as a divine commandment. Indeed, I was slowly coming to envy the certainty that religious faith afforded, and I began to think seriously about joining a church. At the same time, I knew that no matter how noble and well-intentioned, worldly preoccupations were not an adequate reason for doing so.

As if barring my path to church membership stood the figure of Jesus Christ. The churches I most respected all required that prospective members affirm their personal faith in Christ as Lord and Savior. I did not question the legitimacy of the requirement, but nothing in my previous life seemed to have prepared me to meet it. To the best of my knowledge, I had no personal experience of religious faith and no real grasp of its nature. When I was twenty, André Amar, a brilliant professor of philosophy and a devout Jew, had spoken to me of religion as a realm unto itself, irreducible to any other, and his words had lodged in my mind, but I did not fully understand them. To this day, I cannot point to a single moment of conversion, no blinding light that opened my eyes, no arrow that pierced my heart. Almost imperceptibly, the balance between doubt and faith shifted, and, on one ordinary day, it came to me that I had decided to enter the Catholic Church.

It would be easy to think that my decision, however lacking in drama, represented the end of my journey to faith. Instead it marked only the beginning of what is proving to be an adventure I could not previously have imagined. The Sunday after reaching that decision, quietly and alone, I went to Mass at the Cathedral of Christ the King in Atlanta. Both my Catholic-born but at the time unbelieving husband and my devoutly Catholic friend and graduate student, Sheila O'Connor, would happily have accompanied me, but I did not tell them where I was going.

I had not attended a Mass since my youth, during visits to France, and then only rarely. I had no clear idea of what to expect, although I knew enough to know that I could not receive communion. Yet an almost visceral instinct told me that this first direct encounter with the faith I was planning to embrace was something I could not foresee and must undertake alone. By now, most of my specific memories of that morning have merged with the countless times I have attended Mass at the Cathedral since. All that stands out is my response to that first hour, as a Catholic-to-be, of confronting the figure of the crucified Christ that dominates the Cathedral. There, directly in front of me, was the Lord I had pledged myself to serve—a Lord whom as yet I barely knew and who nonetheless seemed to hold me fast.

Shortly thereafter, thanks to the help of Sheila's mother, I began to receive instruction from Father Richard Lopez, the remarkable priest who remains the confessor and spiritual director for my husband and me. Fr. Lopez rapidly determined that I was much more familiar with Catholic theology than he had reason to have expected, and thereafter his instruction focused primarily upon the practice, rituals, and traditions of Catholicism. Between our meetings, I read the *Catechism* and other books on the elements of Catholicism, attended Mass, and learned and said prayers. During the meetings, Fr. Lopez guided me through the practical meaning of words and rituals. We discussed the significance of the colors priests wear during the different seasons of the liturgical calendar, the role of the Virgin Mary and the saints as intercessors, the structure of the Mass, and more. In retrospect, what astonishes me is how much I learned and how little I truly understood. For the words we exchanged, valuable as they were, remained mere words. Learning them felt like a privileged initiation, but I used them rather in the way in which one learns to say the beads of the Rosary before one begins to grasp the immediacy of the events they signify.

In deciding to enter the Church, I had decided that I believed in Christ Jesus and accepted him as my Lord and Savior, but even as my love for and commitment to the Church deepened, I remained unsure of precisely what my faith meant or from whence it derived. Fr. Lopez reassured me that faith and faithfulness were, above all, matters of the will rather than the emotions, which, he insisted, remain inherently suspect. His words conformed to what I had learned from my own reading in Catholic theology and eased my occasional misgivings about the elusiveness of my own feelings. On the day of my reception, which included the sacraments of baptism, confirmation, penance, marriage, and communion, a transformative joy consecrated a decision that now seemed to derive as much from the heart as the mind.

That joy, although varying in manifestation and

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intensity, has persisted since. But my understanding of its meaning has not ceased to change and grow. Today I see more clearly than I could at the time that much of my initial hesitation and diffidence derived from my unconscious persistence in materialist habits of thought. Like any good rationalist, I kept looking for unambiguous explanations for my turn to faith, and, although the possible candidates abounded, none clearly stood out as *the* reason. It took two or three years for me to begin to understand that the decisive action had not been mine but God's. In principle, we all know that faith is a gift or grace, not a personal accomplishment. But if my case is as common as I suspect it is, we find that knowledge surprisingly difficult to believe and make fully ours. Thus, with the best of intentions, we try to earn that which lies beyond the reach of even our most heroic efforts and which exceeds any merit we can conceive.

An important part of what opened me to Catholicism—and to the peerless gift of faith in Christ Jesus—was my growing horror at the pride of too many in the secular academy. The sin is all the more pernicious because it is so rarely experienced as sin. Educated and enjoined to rely upon our reason and cultivate our autonomy, countless perfectly decent and honorable professors devote their best efforts to making sense of thorny intellectual problems, which everything in their environment encourages them to believe they can solve. Postmodernism has challenged the philosophical presuppositions of the modernists' intellectual hubris, but, with the same stroke, it has pretended to discredit what it calls "logocentrism," namely, the centrality of the Word. In the postmodernist universe, all claims of universal certainty must be exposed as delusions, leaving the individual as authoritative arbiter of the meaning that pertains to his or her situation. Thus, what originated as a struggle to discredit pretensions to intellectual authority has ended, at least in the American academy, in a validation of personal prejudice and desire.

Sad as it may seem, my experience with radical, upscale feminism only reinforced my growing mistrust of individual pride. The defense of abortion especially troubled me because of my inability to agree that any one of us should decide who has the right to live. But my engagement with faith drew me into more general reflection about the importance of charity and service in the life of the Christian. Initially, I had shied away from the idea of the imitation of Christ and even from the entreaty in the Universal Prayer to "make me holy." Such aspirations struck me as the ultimate presumption: who was I to pretend to holiness, much less the imitation of our Savior? Gradually, those fears began to dissipate, and I found myself meditating upon the Gospels' teaching on service, above all, that "the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve and to offer his life as a ransom for all." Having been received in the Church on the day after the feast of the Immaculate Conception, I also pondered the Holy Mother's response to the Annunciation: "Let it be done unto me according to Thy Word."

The injunctions to charity and service unmistakably applied to all Christians, but it was difficult to deny that, since the moment of the Virgin Mary's response to the Angel Gabriel, they applied in a special way to women. Her example, as Hans Urs von Balthasar has reminded us, offers the exemplary embodiment of faith. "Faith is the surrender of the entire person: because Mary from the start surrendered everything, her memory was the unsullied tablet on which the Father, through the Spirit, could write His entire Word." It is incontestable that, throughout most of history, women have suffered injustices and abuse that cry out for redress. It is no less incontestable that the path to justice and dignity for women—the recognition of their equal standing with men as human persons—cannot lead through the repudiation of the most basic tenets of our faith. No amount of past oppression can justify women's oppression of the most vulnerable among us—or even our repudiation of our own specific vocation as women.

Pope John Paul II has written extensively on the special dignity and mission of women, frequently provoking the shrill opposition of feminists, especially Catholic feminists. Above all, feminists deplore his insistence upon the abiding differences between women and men and upon women's exclusion from the priesthood. I would be astonished if, at one point or another, every woman has not tasted some of that anger, the outraged sense of "Why me? Why should I always be the one to give?" And it does not help if men interpret women's yielding as proof of men's superiority. Not expecting heaven on earth in the near future, I see little prospect that either of these responses will simply evaporate. Yet both miss the key to the Holy Father's theology of the person, namely, that the essence of our humanity lies in our capacity for "self-gift." This understanding links our relations with one another to our relation to God, reminding us of the danger of treating another person as an object. It also suggests that, whether in relation with others or in communion with God, our highest realization of self results from the gift—or loss—of self.

In our time, it is countercultural indeed to see the loss or effacement of self as an admirable goal. Our culture's obsession with identity and the rights of the individual seems to suggest precisely the reverse. You

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will nonetheless recall the First Beatitude: "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of Heaven" (Matthew 5:3). For years the passage, when I thought of it, puzzled me. In what way was poverty of spirit to be seen as desirable, especially in a Christian? And what, precisely, did poverty of spirit mean? I had left the question, together with others that I hoped some day to understand, in the back of my mind until I happened upon Erasmo Leiva-Merikakis' eye-opening explanation in his *Fire of Mercy, Heart of the Word: Meditations on the Gospel According to St. Matthew* (1996). Pointing out that this is not merely the first of the Beatitudes, but the only one in the present tense, Leiva-Merikakis explains that the poor in spirit are those who literally "beg for their life's very breath"—those who depend upon God the way we all depend upon air to breathe. Poverty of spirit is the grace of those who have emptied themselves of everything but the desire for God's presence, "who offer God a continual sacrifice from the altar of their spirit, and the sacrifice in question is the very substance of their being." And those who achieve poverty of spirit have their reward in the present as well as the future, for to live in poverty of spirit is indeed to live with God.

A decisive moment in my journey in faith came when, one day, seemingly out of nowhere, the thought pierced me that Jesus had died for my sins. And, immediately on its heels, came the devastating recognition that I am not worth his sacrifice. Only gradually have I come truly to understand that the determination of worth belongs not to me but to him. God's love for us forever exceeds our control and challenges our understanding. Like faith, it is His gift, and our task is to do our best to receive it. The knowledge, even when partial and imperfect, that He loves us also opens us to new responsibilities and obligations. For if He loves us all, He also loves each of us. And recognition of that love imposes on us the obligation to love one another, asking no other reason than God's injunction to do so. As fallen human creatures, we are nonetheless likely to continue to search for human reasons that justify our loving service to those in whom we find little or no obvious redeeming value. And the best human reason may be found in the faith that God has freely given us: our nonjudgmental love of the other remains the condition of God's love for us. For, knowing how little we merit His love, our best opening to the faith that He does lies not in the hope of being better than others, but in the security that His love encompasses even the least deserving among us. FT

Lent

Oh God, we struggle through sluices
of time like salmon called
by some instinct beyond
instinct

Oh God, we surge through falls
and reason's streams like rivulets, lured
by some will beyond our will—
lent us

Oh God, we slice slippery through quietness
gathered into the folds of your net
that our run may be complete in
You our source.

R. DeBacco

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Review Essay

What Sex Is—And Is For

Gilbert Meilaender

Sexuality and the Christian Body. By Eugene F. Rogers, Jr. *Blackwell. 303 pp. $62.95.*

The blurbs on the back cover of this book create in the potential reader an expectation of something new—a creative, original approach to the morality of homosexual acts, not just a rehashing of standard arguments. And there is much in the book that one might not have anticipated, even if a good bit of it is repetitive and tangential, some of it mischievous, and relatively little of it moral argument. Yet Rogers' case for "the fittingness in the Christian tradition of married same-sex relationships" turns out to be the following familiar one: that what counts morally is quality of relationship—motive and love (not law); that we need to listen to the experience of gays and lesbians; that the Spirit is doing something new in the Church.

The book falls roughly into three parts, none of which admits of easy summary. In Part One Rogers attempts to depict the controversy within the Church, to characterize what he calls "liberal" and "conservative" positions as they are heard by those with whom they disagree. Part Two takes a long look at Aquinas (on natural law and the reading of Scripture) and Barth (on the relation of Jews and Gentiles, and men and women), attempting to "make space" for assessments of homosexuality that they themselves admittedly did not hold and finding in each what Rogers terms a "surprising openness" for more positive assessments. Part Three sets forth what Rogers calls his constructive argument for an understanding of marriage wide enough to include same-sex couples. Nevertheless, I suspect that many readers will not find it easy to reconstruct the argument, which certainly cannot be said to develop in linear fashion, and I will offer my own account of it here, recognizing that my analysis attempts something more straightforward than Rogers in fact offers.

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First, though, a word is in order about how Rogers sets the terms of the discussion in Part One. Depicting the conflict as one between liberals and conservatives situates it chiefly within our society's culture wars and shapes the argument in a certain way from the outset. "Conservatives" turn out to be those who want to import "the politics of culture wars" into the life of the Church, while "liberals" turn out to be those who support "the politics of baptism," who refuse to divide the Church into friends and foes over an issue that is (we are evidently to assume) not central to the faith. What, then, could one say of a statement such as the following from Wolfhart Pannenberg? "If a church were to let itself be pushed to the point where it ceased to treat homosexual activity as a departure from the biblical norm, and recognized homosexual unions as a personal partnership of love equivalent to marriage, such a church would stand no longer on biblical ground but against the unequivocal witness of Scripture. A church that took this step would cease to be the one, holy, catholic, and apostolic Church."

Whatever one thinks of Pannenberg's view, his claim is theological, not political. One who held such a view would not be likely to recognize in the first chapters of this book what Rogers says he is offering: an account that puts the best construction on the argument of each side. The Church has generally understood the gospel that makes its unity possible as one that shapes both faith and life. It has, therefore, had to distinguish between actions that follow Christ

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and actions that turn against him. It has sought, that is, to give structure and shape to the language of love (language that is so easily reduced to motive alone). If those who do this are depicted as importing "the politics of culture wars" into the Church's life, then their concern for "the holiness of the people of God" (the title of Rogers' third chapter) is not really being taken seriously.

Whatever the failings of his opening chapters, however, Rogers, at his best, wants to address the issue of homogenital activity as a theological one. (This does not mean that he attaches great importance to arguments about, say, prohibitions in Leviticus of homosexual activity. Those he reads primarily as rules about ritual purity, intended to separate Israel from the surrounding peoples. The argument he makes proceeds at a level of greater generality.) His case proceeds roughly as follows. First, and perhaps most important, just as the first Christians came to see that the gospel required the inclusion of Gentiles, so we are now seeing that it requires also the inclusion of same-sex couples. (There is something a little bizarre about attempting to use one of the most difficult and obscure theological questions—the relation of Jews and Gentiles—to clarify the Church's judgment about homosexual behavior, but the move is not uncommon, and here I simply try to follow Rogers' discussion.)

As the Spirit was once poured out upon the Gentiles, so now that same Spirit is doing a work among gays and lesbians that cannot be denied. (Indeed, Rogers does not hesitate to say that denying it may "put Gentile Christians in danger of their salvation.") Just as Paul (in Romans 11) thought that, in grafting Gentile branches cut from a wild olive tree into the cultivated tree of Israel, God had done something "contrary to nature," so now God brings into the Church gays who (according to Paul in Romans 1) act contrary to nature. The "against nature" of Romans 11 governs and, in essence, overturns the "against nature" of Romans 1. "What is natural," Rogers writes, "is that God should love the Jews especially. What is unnatural is that God should incorporate the Gentiles into that love." Thus, "in saving Gentiles, God shows solidarity with something of their nature, the very feature that had led the Jew Paul [in Romans 1] to distinguish himself from them: their excessive sexuality."

There is here, one has to say, a certain amount of sleight of hand. No doubt God may be said to show His solidarity with every form of sin in saving all sorts of sinners. We need not conclude—and Paul did not seem to conclude—that those sinners who seek to follow Christ should simply continue in sin that God's grace may abound. More important, let us consider two points: 1) the appeal to the inclusion of the Gentiles as support for the inclusion of same-sex couples, and 2) what the inclusion of the Gentiles entailed.

When those first Jewish Christians realized that the Holy Spirit seemed to have been poured out upon the Gentiles, they did not regard that experience as self-authenticating and decide that their scriptures were wrong to have spoken of the election of Israel. On the contrary, this experience forced them to return to those scriptures and discover in them a truth they had previously overlooked: that God's covenant with Abraham was, from the start, intended for the blessing of all nations, so that the Gentiles too might come to Zion. It is profoundly misleading, therefore, when Rogers writes, "What is natural is that God should love the Jews especially. What is unnatural is that God should incorporate the Gentiles into that love."

This misleads in forgetting that there are no natural privileges with God—that the branches from the cultivated tree can be cut off. And more important still, it misleads in forgetting that God's special love for Israel is grounded not in nature but in His covenant and commitment—which covenant from the outset had the Gentiles also in view. This is the truth about Jews and Gentiles that those first Jewish Christians discovered when they reread their scriptures. To make of the inclusion of the Gentiles a ground for inclusion within the Church of same-sex couples one would need a similar reading of Scripture—not just an appeal to experience and a claim that this experience is the work of the Spirit, not just a claim that the scriptures are wrong.

Moreover, we need to remind ourselves what the inclusion of the Gentiles actually entailed. Paula Fredriksen has recently summarized it quite succinctly: the Jews of Jesus' time were quite ready to deal with interested Gentiles on several different bases. Many Gentiles, while continuing also to worship their ancestral gods, added worship of Israel's God and adopted as much or as little of Jewish practice as they wished. With that Jews had no quarrel. If, however, a Gentile actually wanted to convert to Judaism, he had to give up the worship of his ancestral deities and observe Torah (e.g., its requirement of circumcision for men, its dietary restrictions, its Sabbath observance). So the Gentile either had to remain a kind of "fellow traveler," an interested outsider, or become a Jew. When, however, the Spirit was poured out upon the Gentiles, the Church did a new thing: Gentiles were to give up their pagan gods and worship the God of Israel alone, yet this did not mean that they had to become Jews (by being circumcised, keeping the Sabbath, etc.). To turn to Israel's God did mean, however, to seek holiness of life. To renounce their ancestral gods meant renouncing behavior associated with idolatrous rejection of

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God's creative design for human life—behavior that on the evidence of Romans 1, includes homosexual behavior. That is what the inclusion of the Gentiles actually meant.

The other part of Rogers' case extends the argument. Just as the inclusion of the Gentiles meant bringing them into a new vision of the people of God, so also does inclusion of same-sex couples provide a means for building up the family of God. This, in Rogers' view, is what sex is for. It is intended to draw us into a faithful, monogamous (albeit opposite sex *or* same sex) union that disciplines persons in such a way as to liberate them for holiness. Marriage is therefore, Rogers wants to emphasize, an "ascetic practice" through which God draws us (even and especially as sexual beings) into the kind of mutual love that characterizes God's own triune life. Before God, therefore, sex is, Rogers repeatedly emphasizes, for sanctification. It is for anything else (in particular, procreation) only insofar as that promotes the end of sanctification.

Thus, Rogers says, we put sex in service of sanctification when we ask, What do we want to do with our bodies? And when we answer, We should use our bodies to love others in ways that show that they are wanted, even as it is the purpose of Christianity to teach human beings that God wants them. We image God's love in our bodies when we love in ways that say to another that he is desired. To love in that way, Rogers is persuaded, cannot be wrong. To tell those who feel no call to celibacy that they must renounce such love is, in essence, to tell them that they are not really wanted and loved (unless they first become something else—a disembodied creature). The desires that come naturally to us cannot be taken up into the life of the triune God—transformed and perfected—if they are rejected, repressed, and labeled as sin. They can be perfected only when we allow them to image the faithfulness of God's own love and liberate them for that splendor.

It is quite true to say that the Church has generally understood sanctification as one of the purposes of marriage. It exists for the healing of our desires, for the reordering of them in accord with God's will. That is one of the things sex and marriage are for. But not the only thing. And the first question is not, What do we want to say with our bodies? It is, rather, What does God want us to say with them? Sex and marriage are also for community and procreation.

One of the purposes of marriage is that we should learn the meaning of community with another person who is really an other. Not just another one like myself, but one who is different in ways constitutive of our humanity—as different as a woman is from a man. I am to learn, that is, not just to love faithfully one like myself but so to overcome that forbidden love of self that I love even in the face of bodily difference—lest I should one day be unable or unwilling to get out of my own skin enough to love the One who is truly Other.

Sex and marriage are also for procreation, in order that we may see that, by God's grace and blessing, this kind of love for an other is creative and fruitful—that through our love God may continue to speak His "yes" to human life. Against the Church's traditional emphasis upon procreation as one of the central purposes of marriage, Rogers claims that adoption is a better image—at least for Gentiles—of our relation to God and that "the Holy Family has more of adoption in it than nature." There is here, one fears, just a touch of the scorn toward "breeders" often manifested in the gay movement, but, more important, there is also a failure to be Barthian enough (in a book that draws heavily on Barth).

Undoubtedly, none of us has a natural claim on God, but a truly Barthian treatment would emphasize not only the covenant that is the internal meaning of creation but also the (structure of) creation that is the external basis of covenant. That external basis includes marriage as a community of male and female, ordered toward procreation. As Michael Banner has recently put it, a Barthian ethic would understand God's claim on us under the threefold form of God the creator, reconciler, and redeemer. "As the command of the creator," Banner writes, "the command of God commands us to be what we are. As the command of the reconciler, the command of God is directed against the disorder of our present existence. As the command of the redeemer, the command of God directs us to the good future which God intends, and thus to what we shall be."

Rogers misses the first two of these forms. His discussion is Manichean in that the constitution of our humanity as male and female is not a form that comes from the good God—and Pelagian in that it praises too much our desires as we find them, not letting the needed transformation cut deeply enough to put to death the sinful self. As Josef Pieper once put it, the transformation of our natural loves "perhaps resembles passing through something akin to dying," and it is therefore "much more than an innocuous piety when Christendom prays, 'Kindle in us the fire of Thy love.'"

This is not to deny what is so evident to Rogers: that such a call to order our loves rightly, which may sometimes mean a call to renunciation of genital activity (though not, *pace* the way Rogers sometimes puts it, a renunciation of our sexuality), may be experienced as painful indeed. When eros overtakes us—even an eros

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that is not rightly ordered—no one should try to tell us that nothing significant has happened. Even a distorted eros bears traces of its divinity, and it may well seem ennobling. But we need to remind ourselves that this is true for many people, not just for gays and lesbians. The single man who has found no wife, who has begun to despair of ever finding a wife, and who finds himself in love with his neighbor's wife is experiencing something very significant indeed. It may even, in some respects, make him a better man than he has been heretofore. Her bodily embrace may seem, for the first time in his life, really to persuade him that he is desired and wanted. Renunciation of that embrace may resemble for him "passing through something akin to dying." But it is to such renunciation that he must be directed. If, nevertheless, he does not repent and marries her, theirs is not a wedding feast that the Church should celebrate.

Something like this is, I think, the core of Rogers' case, as I have attempted to cull it from the first and third parts of the book. Part two of the book does something different. It attempts to find in Aquinas and Barth—a great theologian of nature and an equally great theologian of revelation—a certain "space" within orthodox Christianity for the sort of position Rogers affirms, even while granting, of course, that neither theologian can be claimed as a supporter of same-sex marriage. This is a long and complicated section, to which I cannot possibly do justice here. But in certain respects Rogers' treatment of each theologian is unsatisfactory, and I will say just enough to express reasons for unease.

Rogers argues for a particular way of reading Aquinas' treatment of natural law. His approach is not especially new, and it is, I think, at least reasonable. It would be hard to call it compelling, since Aquinas scholars themselves are likely always to be divided on this approach to reading him. All too briefly, Rogers' preferred reading is this: only the other virtues enable us to have the virtue of prudence—really to discern what the natural law requires. That is, the natural law may be self-evident, but it is not obvious—and the unjust man will never really be able to "see" what it requires. But once we become more virtuous—acquire, for example, the virtue of justice—we may see the natural law quite differently than we had before. Virtue and seeing nature rightly go together.

This is, as I noted, a possible, though not compelling, way to read Aquinas. (One might equally well argue that prudence—seeing nature rightly—is needed if we are to have any of the other virtues whole and entire. That, of course, would put a very different spin on the argument.) By reading Aquinas in this way, Rogers thinks he can "make space" for an affirmation of same-sex marriage. Assuming (as Rogers simply does throughout) that we now see such virtues as love and fidelity displayed in same-sex unions, and if virtue and seeing nature rightly go together, then, he thinks, a contemporary Thomistic analysis ought to lead us to a conclusion about same-sex unions quite different from Thomas' own conclusion. That is, gays who have the virtue of faithfulness in love may come to see something about nature that had not been seen before. We cannot deny their account of nature unless we are also willing to deny that they possess the virtue of faithfulness—since virtue and seeing nature rightly go together.

This is hardly persuasive. Were it true, we would be forced to deny the virtue of those who think same-sex unions contrary to nature and wrong; yet, their virtue too may sometimes seem manifest. The truth is that, even on this reading of Aquinas, virtue and seeing nature rightly come together only at the end of a very long road. Along the way our virtues and vices will always be a mixed lot—as, then, will be our capacity to see rightly. Our powers of discernment are always distorted by vice, and we can scarcely claim our moment in history as one uniquely suited to see the truth of what nature requires.

Such pessimism about our powers of discernment might drive us from nature to Scripture for guidance. Rogers devotes a good bit of space to a discussion of Aquinas' interpretation of Romans 1, but here I will mention only his long treatment of Barth, who may be the preeminent theologian of revelation in the Church's history. Because marriage is a type of God's love for Israel, Rogers turns for insight to Barth's treatment of the relation between Jews and Gentiles—which treatment, he claims, finally ends in "abstraction." By this Rogers means that Barth talks about Israel in a way that—perhaps unintentionally, but nonetheless insidiously—conceals or blots out the reality of particular Jews. Attempting to set himself against views Christians have sometimes held, Barth argues that God wills the continuing existence of Jews; yet, he also holds that God does not will the continuing existence of the practices that constitute and set apart the community of Jews.

Something similar happens, Rogers suggests, in Barth's discussion of sexuality. For Barth, the fact that our lives are ordered toward covenant community with God finds its counterpart in the fact that our humanity is always a "being-in-fellow-humanity," and the first and typical sphere of fellow-humanity is the differentiation and relation of male and female. By understanding male-female complementarity as constitutive of our humanity, Barth has, Rogers argues, made marriage essential to that humanity. In doing so

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he—perhaps unintentionally, but nonetheless insidiously—conceals or blots out the reality of particular people, gays and lesbians. Most astonishingly, Rogers says, Barth loses the human reality of Jesus, who himself was not married. If a man-woman pair is necessary to exhibit the image of God, Jesus himself cannot be such an image. In order to overcome this abstraction we must, according to Rogers, correct Barth and say: "Male-female complementarity may be typical of co-humanity, but it need not be essential."

I think this does more than "make space" in Barth; it misreads him. Barth is quite clear that the man-woman differentiation that constitutes our co-humanity has its center in marriage but does not coincide with it. Indeed, Barth writes of the man-woman relationship that it is wider than marriage, "embracing the whole complex of relations at the center of which marriage is possible." He specifically notes in this connection that Jesus had no bride other than the new community he founded, and he calls 1 Corinthians 7 "the Magna Carta of all who are unmarried." Hence, not to marry, even to repress and sublimate erotic desire, is not a renunciation of our created sexuality or of the man-woman complementarity that constitutes our being-in-fellow-humanity. And, contrary to Rogers' sleight of hand, we are not required to suppose that, because Jesus does not marry, his humanity is not that of a man always existing as a *sexual* being in relation to woman.

Because the morality of same-sex relations is currently so divisive within the Church, a few other matters deserve brief comment. Rogers' book displays what one might call (using the term purely descriptively) an idiosyncratic approach to the question. It attempts to say something new and different, to avoid the same old arguments. My own conclusion, having read it, is that this does not work very well. Quite often the old arguments are old for a good reason: they are central. That the issue does not go away, that not all are persuaded, may tempt us to suppose that the old arguments are not good ones—as if good arguments were always persuasive to all. But Kant scholars do not stop arguing about whether the categorical imperative is so purely formal as to be materially useless just because no argument seems persuasive to all. Plato scholars do not stop writing about the Socratic paradox just because no explication of it has ever been persuasive to all. Rousseau scholars do not tire of attempting to give a coherent reading of his seemingly contradictory works simply because no such reading is likely to be persuasive to all. Yet, on the issue of homosexuality, Rogers writes that "the thrust and counterthrust [of the standard arguments] is mostly a dreary business." That it is unlikely to bring about general agreement any time soon we may readily grant, but I, at least, do not see why that makes it a dreary business. The arguments exist to clarify and articulate the Church's biblical teaching, not to do something strikingly original. And that, on the whole, is a good thing.

It is also worth pondering briefly what we might call the academic location of Rogers' work. Over the past two decades a basic debate over theological method has gone on within the American academy, a debate that (to oversimplify a bit) has pitted "Chicago" (and its continuation of the liberal project of making the faith intelligible to its cultured despisers) against "Yale" (and its "postliberal" project that depicts the faith as something like its own culture, which seeks to absorb the world rather than simply offer a response to the world's implicitly religious questions).

"Yale's" approach seemed to offer possibilities for recapturing theology as a churchly undertaking, with its own standards and its own grammar, even if postliberalism has not often in the last twenty years gotten much beyond debates about method (with the work of William Placher being a notable exception to that generalization). It seemed to offer Protestants a way to recapture a coherent reading of Scripture—perhaps even, to put the matter in a way that is a little too grandiose but still telling, to do for Protestants what the Magisterium does for Catholics.

Rogers' own training and outlook situate him within that postliberal approach, and it is therefore striking that one of the first books from within this school of thought to treat an important issue in normative ethics should turn out to argue for a radical revision of the Church's teaching. This sharpens the division between a few Protestants, on the one hand, and Evangelical, Eastern Orthodox, and Catholic Christians on the other. I don't quite know what to make of that, but it is a fact worth pondering. At the very least we might conclude that "method" will not save us.

Finally, I noted above Rogers' claim that "failing to accept faithful, monogamous gay and lesbian marriages may deny the work of the Spirit and put Gentile Christians in danger of their salvation." We must assume that this is no mere rhetorical flourish, for he says as much at several other places. Jesus says that the kingdom of heaven is like a wedding feast and (on Rogers' reading) warns those who will not celebrate same-sex marriages that, in cutting themselves off from the work of the Spirit, they risk being cast into the outer darkness. That is understandable, for, after all, those who accept the Church's traditional teaching must say to anyone who acts in accord with the position Rogers recommends that, insofar as one sins deliberately, one risks becoming the sort of person who will not bend the knee at the name of Jesus—that

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is, one puts one's salvation in danger.

If such warnings are seriously meant, it is more than a little lame to suggest (as Rogers does elsewhere in the book) that—in the face of such deep and consequential disagreement—this difference between traditionalists and revisionists can be thought of as an opposition "no longer at the center of things." To the degree that this is what the "reconciled diversity" of mainline Protestantism means as an ecumenical program, it is unworthy of our support. A unity purchased so entirely at the cost of truth could not possibly be a unity "in Christ." It would—I say this in all seriousness—be far better if we were simply to begin once again to believe seriously in purgatory and were to adopt an ecumenical posture that is more patient, that accepts the fact of visible division among those who name the name of Christ, and that is less driven to manifest unity here and now.

If Rogers is right, then traditionalists who want to bend the knee at the name of Jesus will eventually need to have their unwillingness to celebrate at the wedding feasts of gays and lesbians purged from them. If Rogers is wrong, then revisionists who want to bend the knee at the name of Jesus will eventually need to have their deliberate embrace of sin purged from them. And if such purgation should be needed by either and be refused—well, of course, then nothing will remain but the outer darkness. For the time being, however, we cannot overcome that division—and must therefore recognize it. FT

Memento Mori

The ancient monks saw the handwriting on the skull.
Whenever their old Adam lusted for excess,
Their grinning scold was there to remind them
Of the grave's everlasting austerity.
Today we have a memento mori less stark,
Much better suited to an age of artifice.
I mean the old Hollywood movie, that phoenix
Rising from the filmcans to undeceive us,
To tell us death has dominion even over
The purebred idols of the silver screen,
Those who made life seem larger and are no more.
Chaplin cooking his shoe in the frozen Klondike,
Bette Davis imperiously puffing a cigarette,
Cary Grant and Grace Kelly outshining the Riviera—
How woe-betiding that these glittering are now
No more than dust guests in the deadfall.
For God help us, if death can granulate them,
What about the poor unglamorous rest of us?
Laugh if you like, but when I look up and see
The late Charlie shiver or the late Bette pout
Or hear the late Cary and Grace banter—well,
I swear, not the angel of death pinwheeling down,
Not Savonarola preaching by torchlight on Golgotha,
Could speak to me as these on the place of the skull.

John Martin

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Review Essay

George Eliot: Good Without God

Alan Jacobs

George Eliot: The Last Victorian. By Kathryn Hughes. *Farrar, Straus & Giroux. 400 pp. $30.*

On the second day of January 1842, in a mild corner of the English Midlands, a young woman of twenty-two named Mary Ann Evans refused to attend church with her father. "Robert Evans' response," writes the young woman's most recent biographer, "was to withdraw into a cold and sullen rage." Thus began what Mary Ann called a "holy war."

The conflict had been coming for some time. Robert Evans—the agent of a large estate in Warwickshire, near Coventry—had raised his children as middle-of-the-road Anglicans, but some of his daughter's teachers, in the "ladies' seminaries" she attended from age nine, were more enthusiastic. Their evangelical piety appealed to Mary Ann, but she had not been in their world for too long before she began to perceive a dissonance between that piety and her already impressive reading in literature, theology, and science. An inner tension mounted, and culminated in a decisive recognition that she was no longer a Christian. What remained was to summon the courage to make this recognition public—which is to say, reveal it to her father. And this is what she did on the second day of January 1842.

Because of her father's silence, Mary Ann felt that she had to explain herself in a letter to him. Of the Bible she wrote, "I regard these writings as histories consisting of mingled truth and fiction, and while I admire and cherish much of what I believe to have been the moral teaching of Jesus himself, I consider the system of doctrines built upon the facts of his life . . . to be most dishonorable to God and most pernicious in its influence on individual and social happiness." This was scarcely calculated to assuage Robert Evans' anger, but it had the singular merit of honesty.

Nearly two years later—after father and daughter had come to imperfect but sustainable terms of peace—Mary Ann was able to write to a friend explaining what she had learned from the "holy war" and sketching the outlines of what had come to replace the traditional faith she rejected. "Speculative truth begins to appear but a shadow of individual minds," she wrote, "agreement between intellects seems unattainable, and we turn to the *truth of feeling* as the only universal bond of union." And this would remain her view. Thirty years later—after Mary Ann Evans had come to London and become Marian Evans, then (in her mind, though not in English law, since the man with whom she lived was married to another) Marian Lewes, and ultimately the great and famous novelist George Eliot—she wrote in very similar terms to Harriet Beecher Stowe: for the good of humankind, orthodox Christianity must be replaced by an ethical religion that would instill in us "a more deeply awing sense of responsibility to man, springing from sympathy with the difficulty of the human lot." Likewise, in commenting on her *Silas Marner*, she would say that it "sets . . . in a strong light the remedial influences of pure, natural, human relations."

The story, told in this way, is a remarkably familiar one: the "Victorian crisis of faith" and its resultant emphasis on the "spirit of human brotherhood" as an unarguably nonsectarian substitute for a failed religion. Why, then, must we tell it so often? Kathryn Hughes' biography is the most recent in what has become, it appears, an annual series: Rosemary Ashton's life of Eliot appeared in 1997, Rosemarie Bodenheimer's in 1996, Frederick Karl's in 1995. Do we need

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so many lives of Eliot? Of course not, and it is largely an accident of publishing that we now have all of these. No doubt each of them was commissioned by editors ignorant of the existence of the other projects—editors aware that no significant full biography of Eliot had appeared since Gordon Haight's authoritative volume of 1968, and that her ever-increasing stature in the pantheon of English writers certainly merited renewed biographical activity.

What is noteworthy is the relatively insignificant degree to which these biographies differ from one another. Karl's is lengthy and ponderous, Bodenheimer's critical rather than strictly biographical (and organized thematically rather than chronologically), Ashton's direct and scholarly, and Hughes' colloquial to the point of breeziness, but all of them tell more or less the same story in more or less the same terms. For (and this may be the chief lesson to be learned from these biographies) George Eliot is perhaps *the* signal figure for those who maintain that we can be good without God, indeed, that belief in the Christian God is a great impediment to the achievement of "individual and social happiness." For literary people who want to have moral standards, or at least the *feeling* of having moral standards, without accruing any metaphysical baggage, Eliot's story warrants continual regard.

One way to understand what Eliot represents is to look at her first and in some respects most beautiful novel, *Adam Bede* (1859). Near the end of the book the Methodist lay preacher Dinah Morris mistrusts her love for the carpenter Adam Bede because she cannot reconcile it with her almost lifelong sense of calling to ministry:

> Since my affections have been set above measure on you, I have had less peace and joy in God; I have felt as it were a division in my heart. And think how it is with me, Adam: that life I have led is like a land I have trodden in blessedness since my childhood; and if I long for a moment to follow the voice which calls me to another land that I know not, I cannot but fear that my soul might hereafter yearn for that early blessedness which I had forsaken; and where doubt enters, there is not perfect love. . . . We are sometimes required to lay our natural, lawful affections on the altar.

Note that Dinah does not believe her love for Adam, even if strong "above measure," to be intrinsically sinful; it is a "natural, lawful affection." And yet she feels that she may be called upon to forgo that love for the sake of a specific calling from God, for the sake, then, of a higher love—including the love of her neighbors, who might also be displaced by the avariciousness of eros: "I fear I should forget to rejoice and weep with others; nay, I fear I should forget the Divine presence, and seek no love but yours." Adam's reply to these concerns is eloquent:

> I don't believe your loving me could shut up your heart; it's only adding to what you've been before, not taking away from it; for it seems to me it's the same with love and happiness as with sorrow—the more we know of it the better we can feel what other people's lives are or might be, and so we shall only be more tender to 'em, and wishful to help 'em. The more knowledge a man has the better he'll do 's work; and feeling's a sort o' knowledge.

In other words, Dinah's love of Adam and her love of God need not compete with one another: they can be complementary forces in the expansion of Dinah's character, the strengthening of the affections that bind our lives and our neighbors' in mutual help and regard. Conversely, were Dinah to "shut up her heart" to the love of Adam, she would be sealing off one entrance for knowledge—that is to say, wisdom—and this could scarcely be pleasing to God.

One would think that Adam here speaks for Eliot herself; and in some respects, though not all, this is true. A few years earlier, before inventing George Eliot, Marian Evans had written a series of brilliant articles for London's *Westminster Review*, one of which (in October 1855) discussed a recent book by a Calvinist preacher in London, Dr. John Cumming. (Among the recent biographers Ashton best recognizes the importance of this essay, while Hughes almost ignores it.) Perhaps the angriest moment in a luminously angry essay comes when Marian Evans evaluates what she thinks of as Cumming's key claim:

> Dr. Cumming's theory . . . is that actions are good or evil according as they are prompted or not prompted by an exclusive reference to the "glory of God." God, then, in Dr. Cumming's conception, is a being who has no pleasure in the exercise of love and truthfulness and justice, considered as effecting the well-being of His creatures; He has satisfaction in us only in so far as we exhaust our motives and dispositions of all relation to our fellow-beings, and replace sympathy with men by anxiety for the "glory of God."

Then follows a witty, indeed a gleefully malicious, catalogue of brave and noble deeds that in Dr. Cumming's scheme could give no pleasure to God. And

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one item in this list bears a close affinity to the dilemma of Dinah Morris, which George Eliot would delineate just three years later:

> A wife is not to devote herself to her husband out of love to him and a sense of the duties implied by a close relation—she is to be a faithful wife for the glory of God; if she feels her natural affections welling up too strongly, she is to repress them; it will not do to act from natural affection—she must think of the glory of God.

When Dinah Morris ultimately *does* agree to marry Adam Bede, then, she refuses the Cumming-like divorce between a supposedly meritorious love of God (coupled with an abstract love of one's neighbor) and a supposedly dangerous love for particular other people. That is, she rejects the picture of human affection that Marian Evans believed typical of the evangelicalism she had embraced as an adolescent and from which she felt she had been rescued by modern theology and philosophy, especially the work of David Strauss and Ludwig Feuerbach (both of whom she had translated into English). Indeed, the words with which Dinah accepts Adam's proposal explicitly join eros and agape: "My soul is so knit with yours that it is but a divided life I live without you. And this moment, now you are with me, and I feel that our hearts are filled with the same love, I have a fulness of strength to bear and do our heavenly Father's will, that I had lost before."

This is very beautiful, but the Epilogue to the novel, set seven years after the conclusion of the main narrative, reveals an interesting complication. In his wooing of Dinah, Adam had explicitly said that she need not think of marriage as an impediment to her career as a preacher, but now we find that she has after all ceased to preach. Now, this is not Adam's doing, but the doing of the Methodist Conference, which in 1803 (really, not just in the novel) forbade women from preaching. But Adam enthusiastically endorses Dinah's decision to obey the conference rather than join another denomination and continue preaching, which Adam's brother Seth believes she should have done. It is not clear that devotion to God and devotion to Adam have proved utterly compatible after all. It may well be that Dinah's former quest for divine love has simply been absorbed into the concerns and affections of everyday life; that, faced with the joyful obligation to love Adam and their children, she has found less need to project a God as the ideal and source of love.

The word "project" inevitably and rightly calls to mind Feuerbach's "projection theory" of religion. Marian Evans' critique of Dr. Cumming is conducted on purely Feuerbachian principles, and the closing paragraphs of her essay are almost a précis of *The Essence of Christianity*:

> The idea of God is really moral in its influence—it really cherishes all that is best and loveliest in man—only when God is contemplated as sympathizing with the pure elements of human feeling, as possessing infinitely all those attributes which we recognize to be moral in humanity. . . . The idea of a God who not only sympathizes with all we feel and endure for our fellow men, but who will pour new life into our too languid love, and give firmness to our vacillating purpose, is an extension and multiplication of the effects produced by human sympathy.

To this useful image Marian Evans contrasts Dr. Cumming's God, who "instead of sharing and aiding our human sympathies is directly in collision with them; who instead of strengthening the bond between man and man, by encouraging the sense that they are both alike the objects of His love and care, thrusts himself between them and forbids them to feel for each other except as they have relation to Him."

Perhaps, then, the Epilogue to *Adam Bede* is to be read as documenting Dinah's escape from the clutches of this ugly and dangerous notion of God. If Dinah gives up preaching in order better to love her husband, children, and friends, she has simply demonstrated the moral self-sufficiency and maturity that Feuerbach and Marian Evans envision as the future of the human race. We can now see how this view differs quite distinctly from that of Adam Bede himself: for Adam, the love of God and the love of others are mutually reinforcing, while for Marian Evans the love of God, or rather the whole notion of God, has a strictly instrumental function and can safely be abandoned when it is no longer needed as a stimulus to the love of one's fellow humans.

I believe Adam's position on this issue to be superior to that of the mature Marian Evans—though earlier in her life, when she was still Mary Ann Evans, she had still thought orthodox Christian doctrine to be "dishonorable to God" as well as injurious to people. But in any case, one consequence of the view Marian Evans came to articulate is that, for all the broad human sympathy for which she became justly famous, in one respect her sphere of sympathetic engagement contracted—namely, in the realm of religious experience.

The pious evangelicals whom she had represented so faithfully and with such warmth in her early work disappear from her later fiction. In *Felix Holt* (1866)

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the evangelical world makes something of a return, but with notably less success. In *Middlemarch* (1872), its only representative is the wretched Mr. Bulstrode with his secret past of vice—a touch too predictable for the creator of Dinah Morris. Even in Eliot's last novel, *Daniel Deronda*, with its remarkable and unprecedented portrayal of Jews in England, it is the ethics of Judaism that she—like Matthew Arnold with his notion of the Hebraic "strictness of conscience"—admires, not its metaphysics. In a letter she tells a friend that Christians owe Jews respect because of their "professed principles," principles she hoped would someday be embodied in a Palestinian Jewish state. A Zionism born of *haskalah* (the Jewish enlightenment) comprises Eliot's portrait of excellent Judaism; the beliefs and worship of Jews are but exotic window dressing.

This waning of sympathy for religious experience is vividly evident in her comments on Newman's *Apologia Pro Vita Sua*: the book was "the revelation of a life—how different in form from one's own, yet with how close a fellowship in its needs and burthens." One would think the book was the autobiography of a Melanesian, so loftily distant is her response; it is the response of a person who knows certain moral stirrings (stemming from "needs and burthens") but who knows better than to project a God from them. I am tempted, when confronted by this attitude, to invoke Nietzsche's scathing comment, in *Twilight of the Idols*, on the difference between the English and the Germans:

> *G. Eliot.*—They have got rid of the Christian God, and now feel obliged to cling all the more firmly to Christian morality: that is *English* consistency, let us not blame it on little bluestockings à la Eliot. In England, in response to every little emancipation from theology one has to reassert one's position in a fear-inspiring manner as a moral fanatic. That is the *penance* one pays there. With us it is different. When one gives up Christian belief one thereby deprives oneself of the *right* to Christian morality.

This is, like most of what Nietzsche wrote, unfair: Eliot was neither a "little bluestocking" nor a "moral fanatic," and moreover drew almost all of her ideas about how to sustain Christian morality without Christian belief from reading Germans like Strauss and Feuerbach. More important, Nietzsche underrates the courage required to make even the effort to sustain moral commitment on such terms. It is Eliot's unwavering earnestness in that effort that leads Hughes to call her "the last Victorian," that is, the last person to believe wholly in the Victorian project of public and private virtue. Faced with the widening cracks in the social and personal foundations of her world, "George Eliot was the last Victorian who believed that it was possible to face these kinds of crises without shattering into shards."

But while Nietzsche's comment is unfair it is also deeply perceptive: Eliot does become ever more passionate about the moral life as her belief in anything transcendent evaporates. Yet events since Eliot's death have revealed with excessive clarity the impossibility of sustaining Christian morality without Christian belief. Nietzsche was indeed prophetic on this score: early in his career he wrote an essay on Strauss that remains to this day an unmatched evisceration of liberal Protestantism, its easy conscience and unfounded cheerfulness.

Perhaps, though, we should not end by noting that Eliot had less foresight than Nietzsche. Would that her hopes had been better justified! And there will always remain something lovely about the earnestness with which her characters pursue their vision of goodness. One thinks of the beautiful but frivolous Gwendolen Harleth at the moment she realizes that Daniel Deronda will marry someone else:

> The world seemed getting larger round poor Gwendolen, and she more solitary and helpless in the midst. . . . That was the sort of crisis which was at this moment beginning in Gwendolen's small life: she was for the first time feeling the pressure of a vast mysterious movement, for the first time being dislodged from her supremacy in her own world. . . . Here had come a shock that went deeper than personal jealousy—something spiritual and vaguely tremendous that thrust her away, and yet quelled all anger into self-humiliation.

For all in our spiritual lives that Eliot came to be blind to, she has few equals as a discerner—and a celebrator—of the small and large mutations of our moral lives. This is much to be grateful for, though the cause of that gratitude can be seen more clearly in Eliot's novels than in the stories her biographers (competent though they be) have woven. As long as even a handful of scholars continue to find her pursuit of goodness attractive, there is hope even for the nearly blighted groves of academe. FT

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Books In Review

Polonius or Paul?

The Trouble With Principle. By Stanley Fish. *Harvard University Press. 328 pages. $24.95.*

Reviewed by **Peter J. Leithart**

"For all the radical talk," Stanley Fish concludes in a summary of the political theory of William Corlett, "what we have here is liberalism all over again." Something similar might be said of this collection of Fish's essays: though he does not, to be sure, revert to liberalism, his radical gesturing has a disappointing payoff. After spending a chapter demolishing liberalism, he closes with the admission that any political recommendation he might offer is "entirely superfluous" and instead gives this advice: "Figure out what you think is right and then look around for ways to be true to it." This is oddly refreshing, for it shows Fish loyal to his position even when it leads him to look like "the new Polonius," as he concedes in a self-deprecating aside. Tracing Fish's path from his radical beginning to this bathetic conclusion provides an instructive illustration of the insights and limitations of secular critiques of liberalism.

The radicalism is on the surface of the book. Fish is against universal principles and neutrality, and in favor of political combat, rhetoric, difference, and taking sides. As the title suggests, Fish's attack is largely directed against the uses of "principle." The sort of principle he objects to is an abstraction "like fairness, impartiality, mutual respect, and reasonableness" that "can be defined in ways not hostage to any particular agenda." Principle in this sense, Fish argues, simply does not exist, because principle and substance are always mixed. Faith comes before reason, and reason is always exercised toward an end that is defined by the starting point. All appeals to equality, for example, are appeals to some substantive concept of equality, and this concept may differ from one disputant to another.

For the same reasons, anytime a "principle" is embodied in law or custom it will favor the interests of some and be detrimental to the interests of others. Affirmative action, for example, is seen as a policy of "fairness" toward historically oppressed minorities, but since it affects many whites unfairly, it is nonsense to defend it by appeal to some universally agreed upon notion of fairness. "Fairness" must be given content or it is vacuous. Fish prefers frankly moral or prudential defenses of policy: affirmative action is defensible (for Fish) not because it is "fair," but because the outcome is a desirable one (for Fish). Not even facts are immune from this form of relativism, since what counts as a fact will vary according to one's network of beliefs. For a Christian, the "facts" brought against the resurrection of Jesus do not erode belief because they do not count as facts. There is, Fish insists, *nothing* in common, and we are left with a clash of "churches," each of which is orthodox to itself.

Though principles do not exist, they still do political and cultural work. In one of his most intriguing gambits, Fish argues that principle, often viewed as a buttress against moral relativism, actually contributes to relativism and is an enemy of resolute moral action. Adherence to principles of free speech and viewpoint neutrality has left American courts incapable of judging between literature and vulgarity, and paralyzed in the face of neo-Nazi propaganda. Their enslavement to principle, in short, makes it impossible for the courts to defend civilization against the barbarians.

Fish does not entirely reject appeals to principle, however. Principles may be invoked as rhetorical feints and jabs in a political rumble. Where liberals appeal to principle with sincerity in an effort to transcend political clashes, Fish appeals to principle because he is "playing to win"—and winning in the current political climate requires just such an appeal.

Politically, Fish's target is not liberalism as a set of policy positions but "Liberalism with a capital L," a system that attempts to "bracket metaphysical or religious views—the sources of intractable endless disputes—so that public questions can be considered in terms that will be accessible to, and appear reasonable to, everyone," regardless of their "comprehensive doctrines." Liberalism claims to open up a political space where all substantive agendas have an equal chance to compete.

But this space is necessarily a bounded space; liberalism is founded, as all political orders are, on an act of exclusion. Agendas that would seek to reshape public life according to a specific vision of the good are outside the bounds. In a word, religion is outside the bounds. Limiting religion's influence on public life is, Fish contends, the liberal project; a regime of tolerance cannot tolerate the intolerant, and by Fish's lights true religious believers must be intolerant of error (more on this below). True believers thus expose the dilemma of liberalism: "If such doctrines are welcomed into the conversation, they may shut it down; if the door is closed to them, liberalism will seem to be exercising the peremptory authority it routinely condemns."

Fish's deconstruction of "Liberal-

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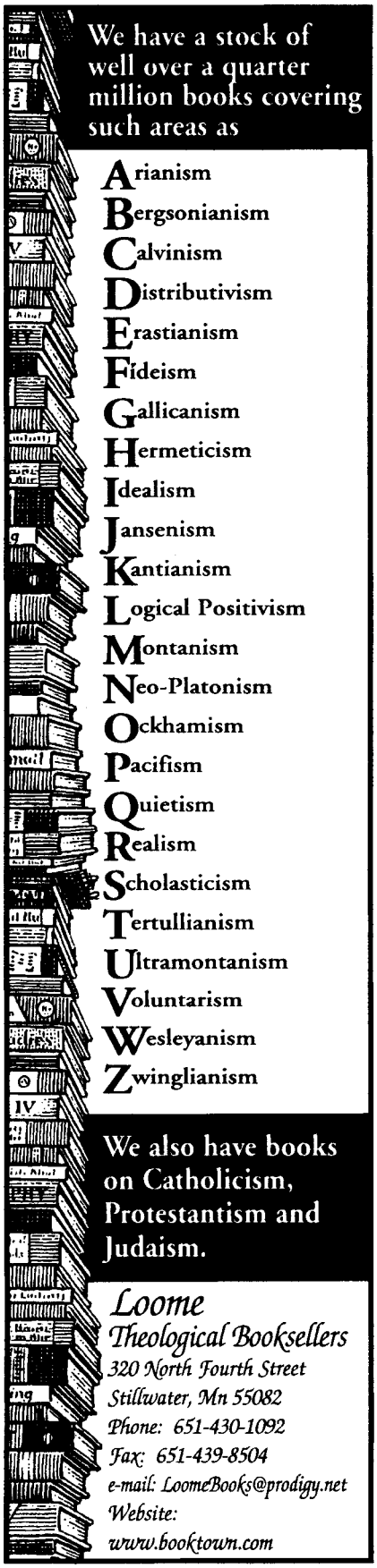

ism with a capital L" is revealing and convincing on many points. He is correct that principles are not neutral, and his analysis of the dynamics by which religion is marginalized gets it exactly right. In the end, however, Fish stands amid the rubble with no blueprints for rebuilding. This is quite deliberate, a consequence of his pragmatism. In his usage, "pragmatism" is a version of antifoundationalism, the view that beliefs and practices are not grounded in anything more basic than history and tradition.

Pragmatism does not, Fish insists, entail any particular moral or political positions, and he fairly revels in its "inconsequentiality." Pragmatism is simply a belief about the way beliefs come to be held, and this belief about beliefs has only "local effects" on one's network of beliefs. Yet pragmatism does have one general effect: it prohibits any generalized political or moral guidance, and thus Fish restricts himself to saying, "you are on your own," and, "the resources you need are within you if they are anywhere." The radical Fish unmoors us from secure anchors, only to turn into Polonius, albeit a rather feisty one.

The claim that pragmatism has only "local effects" points to a set of questions that gets to the heart of Fish's project. His entire critique of liberalism grows from his insistence that political convictions cannot (and should not) be "bracketed." Political actors not only should but necessarily do seek to realize their particular vision of the good. If this is truly the way of the world, however, Fish's critique of liberalism, no matter how persuasive as theory, loses most of its practical force. It amounts to the charge that liberals are not really acting on principle but just engaging in good old political maneuvering, deploying whatever rhetorical weapons are at hand. What would happen if liberals found Fish convincing? They would—and Fish is quite explicit here—continue engaging in good old political maneuvering. They might even persist with the pretense that they are acting on principle, though now consciously as a political tactic. In short, little or nothing would happen.

IN SEVERAL OTHER respects, Fish draws back from the consequences of his radicalism. He has gleeful fun dissing Jürgen Habermas, pointing out that politics is not a philosophy seminar. In response to Richard John Neuhaus, he argues that his professional competence as a Milton scholar is not compromised by his disagreement with Milton's theology, and he warns his readers several times that they cannot draw any conclusions about his own political convictions from his analyses of liberalism. All of this raises a critical question. The issue is not whether politics is a philosophy seminar or a Milton lecture. The issue is how a philosophy seminar or a Milton lecture is possible if in fact it is "politics all the way down," if in fact there is no "device" that enables one to "quarantine politics." Fish limits himself to the claim that *politics* is politics all the way down, but he wants to be able to leave politics to the side when he picks up *Paradise Lost.*

In another revealing passage, he argues that "the way you are in the world of practices is independent of the account you might give of those practices." This means that one can deploy whatever rhetoric is useful at the moment, since deploying a rhetoric "won't commit you to acting in any particular way." The fascinating practical effects of this counsel are worth pondering, but my criticism is about the coherence of Fish's position. He lambasts principle because it is "abstract" and "contentless," but ends by saying that one can play whatever language game one wishes since language games do not bind. Abstraction, it seems, has made an impressive recovery, now at the level of rhetoric rather than at the

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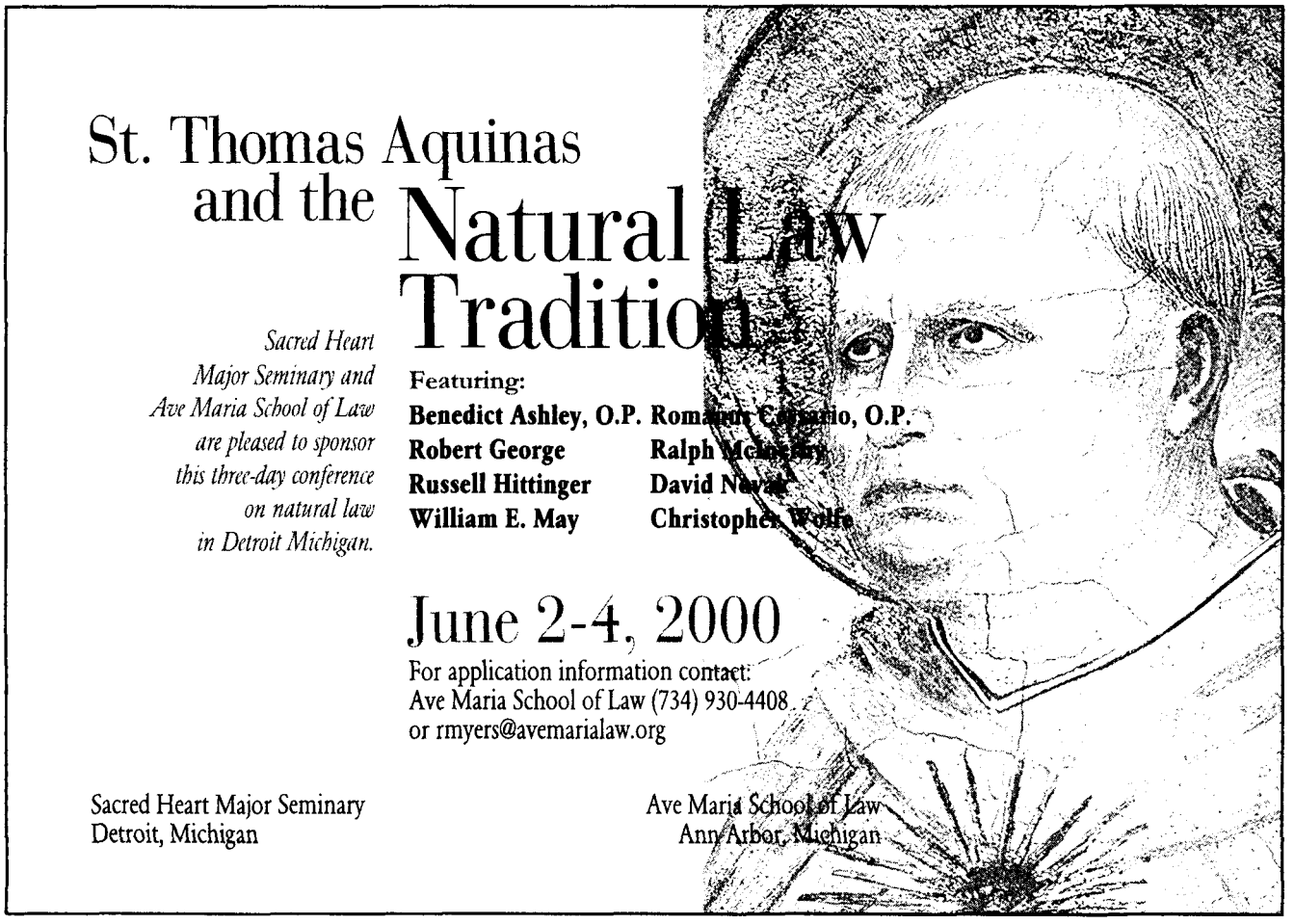
level of principle—and this after Fish has introduced rhetoric as part of his effort to escape abstraction and neutrality. This is hardly a stance that will help him achieve his ambition of making "rhetorical" an "honorific" term.

Although Fish is not a believer, some of the most pertinent implications of this book are theological. By his own admission, he is inclined toward absolutist theological positions. If someone is a true believer, he should want his beliefs to shape the world. This means, for Fish, that believers who appeal to liberal principles of fairness and equal treatment have been coopted by the world. They should want to win, not ensure a fair fight.

Ultimately, Fish is surely correct that a believer will want his beliefs to shape the world, but he has not quite grasped the nuances of theological justifications of the liberal order. He recognizes that believers might employ liberal principles as a way of gaining a foothold in a democratic system, but he fails to see that this strategy may be theologically grounded. It is one thing for a secularist to say that he hopes that truth will out in the marketplace of ideas; it is very different when the same thing is said by a Christian who has confidence in God's providential oversight of human affairs and who looks forward to a final judgment when all injustices will be righted. Against this eschatological horizon, a reluctance to root up the tares is not cooption, but faith. Christians may accept and even defend a penultimate justice (more accurately, an antepenultimate justice) precisely because they know that an order of ultimate justice will one day break through.

But Fish's book raises the question of how a secular defender of liberalism might justify resting satisfied with less than perfect justice. *The Trouble With Principle* suggests unintentionally that the most viable defense of liberalism is its original defense, which was fundamentally theological.

Whether or not a theological defense of liberalism is coherent is another question, one answered negatively in recent years by such theological critics of liberalism as Stanley Hauerwas, John Milbank, and Alasdair MacIntyre (who has become increasingly theological of late). Fish shares much common ground with these writers, but precisely because they work within a theological tradition, they are able to offer substan-



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tive and, one might say, truly radical alternatives to both the Lockean liberalism that Fish attacks and the Hobbesian agonism that he celebrates. In the end, then, Fish pushes antiliberals toward a choice: if one hopes to avoid mimicking Polonius, one must make peace with the apostle Paul.

Prisoner of Principles

RELIGION AND THE AMERICAN CONSTITUTIONAL EXPERIMENT: ESSENTIAL RIGHTS AND LIBERTIES. By JOHN WITTE, JR. *Westview. 379 pp. $75 cloth, $29 paper.*

***Reviewed by* Steven D. Smith**

JOHN WITTE'S BOOK on religious freedom is a work of impressive erudition and formidable complacency. Witte capably surveys the historical developments preceding the First Amendment and supplies a helpful overview of the often neglected period from the adoption of that amendment through the 1940s, when the Supreme Court invaded the field. Later chapters give interesting details on the history of tax exemptions for church property and also furnish a comparative perspective with a quick look at international human rights law. The book contains a wealth of information about, for example, state constitutional provisions and Supreme Court decisions, much of it accessibly presented in appendices. And the chapters summarizing modern establishment and free exercise clause decisions discuss the central cases, accurately on the whole. If the overall presentation here is a bit convoluted, the problem results in part from the fact that it is hard to present in an orderly and sensible way material that is the opposite of orderly and sensible.

Taken as a sort of primer/reference work, in short, this is a useful book to have on the shelf. But the book promises to be more than that. In his introduction, Witte notes that modern developments in religious freedom "have bred not only frustration about the vast inconsistencies of the American experiment but doubts about its very efficacy." Later he describes our situation as one of "acute crisis." Witte proposes to address this crisis by "return[ing] to first principles" in order to reassess those principles in light of the American experience.

This preview raised my hopes, but I misunderstood what Witte had in mind. I thought that by reassessing first principles, Witte meant something like reexamining the basic assumptions that underlie the modern discourse and decisions concerning religious freedom. That sort of reexamination is sorely needed. Instead, Witte vigorously and uncritically acquiesces in the same old assumptions. He gives us more of what we already have too much of.

THE MODERN DISCOURSE of religious freedom coalesces around three central assumptions. What we might call the *consensus assumption* claims that despite the fierce debates and disparate practices that prevailed in this country in the late eighteenth century—varied and contested patterns of state-supported religious establishments, blasphemy prosecutions, and Sabbath laws, for example—Americans of that period had reached, or were on the verge of reaching, a consensus concerning some substantive "principle" (or a few core principles) of religious freedom. The *legalization assumption* asserts that the founders of the Republic gave that consensus force of law by adopting it into the First Amendment. (Lately, finding this assumption too implausible to maintain, a few scholars have begun ascribing the decisive legalization to the Fourteenth Amendment.) The *implementation assumption* holds that it is constitutionally imperative for the courts today to extract the pure constitutional principle or principles from the mass of ostensibly incompatible practices and constructions into which earlier Americans repeatedly lapsed, and then to enforce the pure principle or principles by striking down laws and sweeping away traditions and practices that are inconsistent with "the Constitution."

Implicit in each of these assumptions is the notion that there is such a thing as a "principle" of religious freedom that has some sort of intrinsic or objective solidity and meaning, such that a political community

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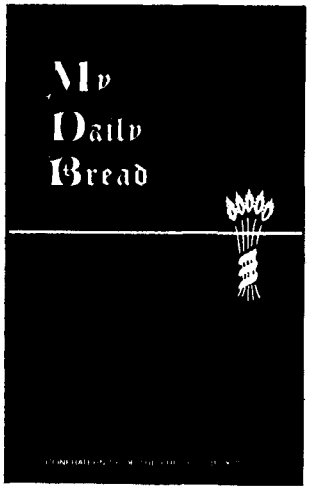

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could constitutionally bind itself to "the principle" despite having only a dim and significantly mistaken understanding of what the principle actually entails. The notion of a "principle" does all the crucial work: it permits us to find consensus in a historical situation that outwardly looks chaotic and hotly contested; it allows us to ascribe portentous significance to a few words that were treated casually by their enactors as a sort of diplomatic but trivial afterthought; and it authorizes the courts today to intervene aggressively into public life in ways that the Founders never contemplated.

IN REALITY, each of these assumptions is, if not simply false, at least in desperate need of reexamination. And the very notion of a constitutional "principle" is richly deserving of skeptical scrutiny. What sort of entity *is* such a "principle," exactly? A mental state? A partially charted chunk of moral reality? Or merely a verbal, honorific label that allows judges and scholars to do all sorts of creative or mischievous things in the name of "the Constitution"?

It seems not unfair to expect some reflection on such matters from a study that acknowledges a "crisis" and promises a reassessment of "first principles." In fact, though, Witte is largely uncritical regarding the dominant assumptions, and he invokes constitutional "principles" over and over again with an almost childlike faith. Indeed, that is his remedy for our crisis—*more principles*. Our current predicament, he thinks, results from "reductionist approaches" that try to understand religious freedom in terms of one or two principles, such as "neutrality" or "separation"; in response, Witte advocates a "multiprincipled" reading.

More precisely, he thinks the First Amendment contains *six* principles of religious freedom: liberty of conscience, free exercise of religion, religious pluralism, religious equality, separation of church and state, and disestablishment of religion. Just why *this* should be the list is never made clear. Surely some of these elements could be collapsed into others; or, conversely, the items could be further broken down to make a longer and more imposing list, as in the international law conventions that Witte approvingly describes. Witte claims that founding-era Americans understood these to be discrete and generally accepted principles but produces no persuasive evidence for the claim. The list's unwieldiness is a detriment at some points because

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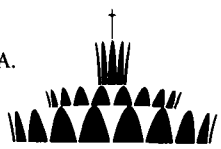

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Witte tries to use the six principles to organize his presentation of modern establishment and free exercise decisions. Since the principles are overlapping and indistinct and the decisions themselves do not draw the lines in the way Witte does, the presentation becomes at times needlessly confusing.

Perhaps these are quibbles. And I hasten to applaud one of Witte's purposes in proliferating principles—his effort, that is, to resist the obsession manifest in some scholars (and Justices) with "separation" as an end in itself. But the weakness in Witte's multiprincipled approach is glaring with respect to two key claims—that the framers meant to incorporate these six principles into the First Amendment, and that more determined recognition of these principles would contribute to making modern law more sound and coherent.

Regarding the first claim about "original intent," the supporting evidence can be easily summarized: Witte offers none. His chapter devoted to original meaning is curious. He begins by reciting some of the events and understandings that would suggest that the First Amendment was meant to be a purely federalist measure; it was calculated simply to confirm in writing what both Federalists and Antifederalists agreed on—that the Constitution was not intended to upset the jurisdictional arrangement that left religion entirely to the states.

But for Witte this is merely background; it does not seem to occur to him here that he might have stumbled upon *the* original meaning and purpose of the provision. In a few pages, Witte then rehearses the entire record of the terse, desultory congressional discussions of what became the religion clauses (though like virtually all modern scholars and Justices, he fails to draw the natural inference from the framers' supremely nonchalant attitude regarding what, on *our* assumptions, should have been a monumental decision).

These casual exchanges offer little clarification, so Witte next turns to the text and is immediately confronted with an intriguing possibility, which he then promptly obliterates:

> One plausible reading is that the final text is a compromise agreement only on the outer boundaries of appropriate congressional action on religion. Congress may not *prescribe* religion. Congress may not *proscribe* religion. Nothing more—and to try to impute more to the text is to overread the unreliable record of debates in the First Congress.

This is a potentially trenchant insight but, sadly, the "nothing more" is summarily retracted. Witte immediately goes on to infer, inexplicably, that this interpretation leaves it to "later discussion and development what governmental bodies, besides Congress, might be bound" and "what conduct short of prescribing or proscribing religion is outlawed." In short, if the First Amendment had minimal content, as its terms suggest, then someone else—lawyers, judges—would just have to give it more. The reason for this expansionist imperative is not explained; Witte seems to regard it as self-evident. Then, having produced no evidence for his position, Witte declares in the chapter's "Summary and Conclusion" that the provision's "pregnant language . . . *can be read*" to incorporate all of the "principles" he has listed; the passive voice, which I have emphasized, substitutes for any evidence that the language *was meant by its enactors* to incorporate those principles.

Later in the book, with the historical context and evidence now comfortably in the distance, Witte affirms with greater assurance: "The Founders viewed the disestablishment clause as both a source and a summary of religious freedom." In this respect, Witte's treatment is entirely typical of the modern judicial and scholarly approach to the subject. *We know* that the First Amend-

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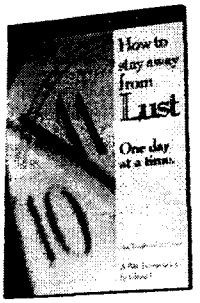

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ment religion clauses were intended to be a rich, far-reaching, judicially enforceable embodiment of religious freedom. We know this because . . . because . . . well, we just know.

Witte's other major claim—that recognition of his six principles would improve modern decisions and contribute to the development of a "coherent framework" for resolving issues of religious freedom—can be considered more briefly. It seems sufficient to say that if Witte were right in supposing that terms like "religious pluralism" and "religious equality" referred to discrete "principles," each with its own meaning and implications, and if he were also right in asserting that modern judges and scholars have neglected some of these "principles" in favor of one or a couple of them, then bringing the other principles back into play might improve the content of the law in some respects; but it almost surely would *not* aid in achieving a "coherent framework" for decision-making. On the contrary, by multiplying the independent factors to be "judiciously balanc[ed]," Witte's approach would make the law even more subjective and unpredictable than it already is.

In reality, there is little cause to worry. In practice (both now and in colonial times), Witte's "principles" have functioned more like highly malleable, substantially interchangeable rhetorical themes; virtually any result in the various controversies that have arisen could be (and usually has been) reached and explained in terms of any of those themes. And though rhetorical preferences differ somewhat from advocate to advocate and from period to period—the "separation" theme drops on the charts as the "equality" theme gains popularity—in fact all of the themes have been available, and in active use, throughout our history. So in the end, the "multiprincipled" approach effectively ratifies what we have been doing all along.

The unfortunate consequence of Witte's entanglement in the standard discourse of "principle" is that the book's considerable promise goes largely unfulfilled. Few legal scholars in this area have Witte's depth of learning. Moreover, his motives and instincts seem sound. For my part, I often agree with his "bottom line" on particular cases and issues (though there is little beyond his say-so to indicate that a "judicious balance" of the sundry principles would support his pre-

RICHARD JOHN NEUHAUS, EDITOR

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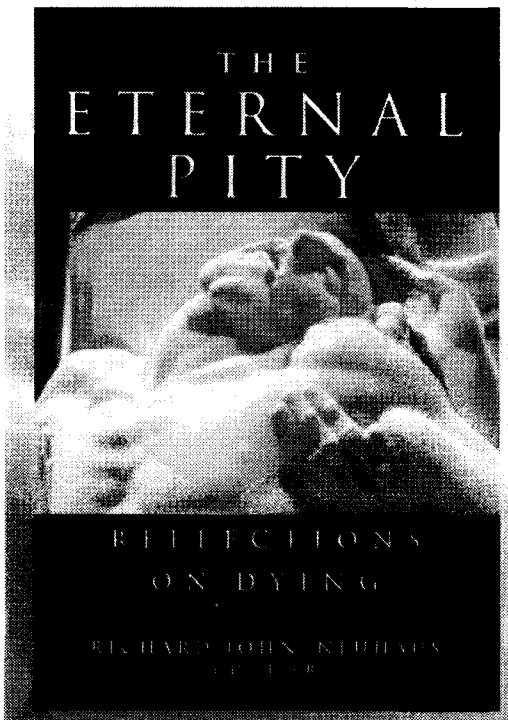

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ferred outcomes over the leading alternatives). Witte wisely urges due deference to tradition. And his intriguing final paragraph (for which little in the book prepares us) suggests that he perceives the harm in excessive judicial interference in religious freedom concerns.

But these prudent counsels have an awkward, gratuitous quality; they are detached from, and at odds with, Witte's overall insistence on viewing the First Amendment as a repository of multiple, sweeping, judicially enforceable principles. The logic of that position demands, if anything, more judicial intervention, not less. In this spirit, Witte asserts that "a strong reading of the principle of separation of church and state . . . remains essential"—though not, he adds, in "unessentials"—and "the Court must be at least as zealous in protecting religious conscience from secular coercion."

It seems that like the rest of us, and despite his better instincts, John Witte is a prisoner of principles.

Beyond the Historical Jesus

Desire of the Everlasting Hills: The World Before and After Jesus. By Thomas Cahill. *Nan A. Talese/ Doubleday. 353 pp. $24.95.*

***Reviewed by* Francis Martin**

This is the third volume in a projected seven-volume series entitled *The Hinges of History,* in which Thomas Cahill means "to retell the story of the Western world as the story of the great gift-givers, those who entrusted to our keeping one or another of the singular treasures that make up the patrimony of the West." The previous volumes—*How the Irish Saved Civilization* and *The Gifts of the Jews*—were extremely popular, and Cahill follows the same basic format here, presenting an introductory description of the world in which the gift-giver appears, a history of the protagonist (in the first volumes a people, not an individual), and finally an assessment of the gift-giver's lasting effects on history.

Cahill begins this book by treating the three concentric circles that made up the world of Jesus and those who were influenced by him and wrote about him—namely, the Roman social and political environment, the Greek cultural and philosophical world, and the Jewish spirit that was both indebted to and suspicious of the other two. Here Cahill displays admirable stylistic and synthesizing skills. He continues by offering a view, based on the Gospels of Matthew and Mark, of "the Jesus the Apostles knew" that, while idiosyncratic in its use of the historical method and mesmerized by "Markan priority," does mediate part of their witness to Jesus. The section's popularization of recent scholarly work that reinserts Jesus into his Jewish milieu is especially useful for a general audience.

It is to Cahill's credit that, in marked distinction to the Jesus Seminar made popular by the media, he does not restrict his attempt to understand Jesus to a study of the Synoptic Gospels. In his third chapter, on "Paul's Jesus," he takes Paul's understanding seriously and shows its continuity with the Gospel witness, the actual written form of which postdates Paul's letters. This

Francis Martin, *a priest in the Archdiocese of Washington, D.C., is Professor of Biblical Studies at the John Paul II Institute on Marriage and Family.*

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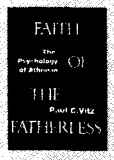

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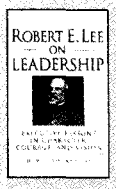

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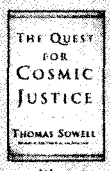

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procedure allows us to see that the Gospels themselves were not written to propagate, enshrine, or defend the memory of a dead master, but to bring readers into contact with the living Lord. Thus, the events of Jesus' life are recounted in the Gospels not only as they transpired in Palestine, but also as they exist now in his risen humanity. The Pauline and other writings are more explicit about the ongoing presence of the risen Christ—something not absent from, but not emphasized in, the Synoptics. However, to use an insight borrowed from Bernard Lonergan, this viewpoint sublates—that is, preserves and raises up—the theologically interpreted history of the earlier tradition, which in its depth and subtlety has a unique capacity to mediate the reality of Christ.

Cahill continues with "Luke's Jesus" (the third Gospel) and "The People of the Way" (Acts). Such a juxtaposition allows us to see a Gospel writer aware of Jesus' ongoing influence—his effective history (to use Gadamer's term)—and once again points to the importance of studying the whole of the New Testament in order to understand Jesus. Cahill correctly points, for example, to Luke's understanding of Christian poverty, friendship, communal living, and care for the stranger or enemy as based on the teaching and example of Jesus and carried on within the early Christian communities. This observation is, it should be noted, an important contribution to the search for the historical Jesus.

The final aspect of the New Testament Cahill takes up is the Johannine tradition. He uses the same approach as before, considering both continuity and development. Here, however, it would have been helpful if Cahill were clearer about what he means by "continuity." He notes, for instance, that "none of the believers we have encountered so far . . . considered Jesus to be God." If by "God" Cahill means what the New Testament means by *Theos*—that is, God the Father (and there are only eight exceptions to this meaning out of 1,314 occurrences)—then there is no problem. If, however, he means that no previous text relates Jesus to the Divinity in a unique manner, then the situation is much more complex. It is precisely on issues of this sort that the limits of historical reasoning become obvious and the need for more sophisticated philosophical and theological categories becomes apparent. Theological texts have to be interpreted theologically.

The seventh and last chapter, "The World After Jesus," eloquently points to ancient and modern individuals and groups who have been faithful to the Spirit of Jesus, including those who have seen better by the gospel light than some who are privileged to carry it. Deep stirrings of the human heart, a cherished desire for peace, a conviction that goodness can overcome the apparent triumph of evil—these permeate our civilization. Jesus is "the mysterious ingredient that laces everything we taste, the standard by which all moral actions are finally judged."

THIS IS AN EARNEST and good book, but it has some serious flaws. Cahill is basically loyal to the New Testament witness, but he often relies on the discipline (it is not a science) of history, notably a particular school of interpretation, to shape his account of events whose inner and transcendent source confers what he himself describes as "a meaning beyond the chaotic surface of events." Of course, every story of Jesus is an interpretation, but those of Matthew, Mark, Luke, John, Paul, and the others have an authority, an aptitude for the subject matter, and a God-given vision of reality that

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cannot be equaled by the tools of modern historiography.

Other interpretations may rightly seek understanding through the historical disciplines, but they cannot replace or sit in judgment over the New Testament interpretation. History is an invaluable servant in faith's effort to render intelligible the reality of Jesus, to be sure, but it is not the master. The present abundance of fanciful lives of Jesus reminds us that particular historical interpretations derive from prior assumptions and commitments that often go unacknowledged. We have the Gospel according to Crossan and the Gospel according to Mark—take your pick.

I find, too, that the well-woven texture of the narrative is disrupted by some of the author's extravagant preoccupations and prejudices. These are signaled by a sudden shrill change in tone, especially when it comes to discussions of sex (including the perpetual virginity of Mary) and encounters with authority (though the author's "arrogant churchmen" admittedly do exist).

The strong points of the book are, first and foremost, that it centers on the Cross of Christ as God's means of reconciling us to Himself even as it stands in judgment over our grasping domination of others. This is Jesus' "gift" to history and his paradoxical promise of meaning and life to everyone. Secondly, as I have mentioned, Cahill takes seriously the witness of the whole of the New Testament and thus avoids the myopia of those who wish to see the significance of Jesus exclusively in his teaching and who bypass the challenge of his sacrificial death and his continuing presence among us. Finally, though the book lacks the merits of more careful studies, it will reach many who would not otherwise have access to the gift of Jesus.

The Dawn of the Modern Papacy

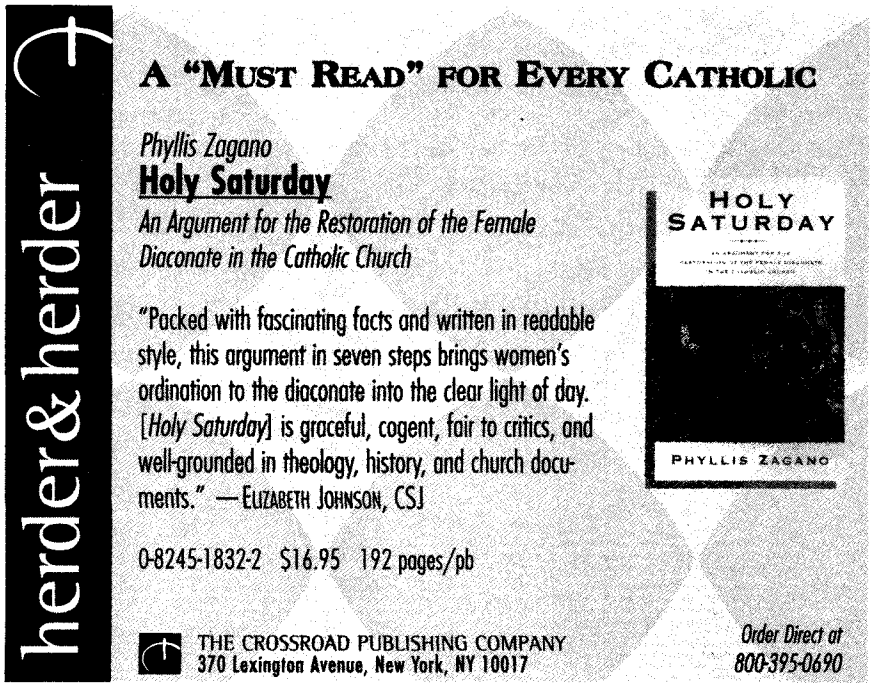
A History of the Popes, 1830-1914. By Owen Chadwick. *Clarendon/Oxford University Press. 614 pp. $135.*

Reviewed by **Russell Hittinger**

A century ago Leo XIII welcomed pilgrims to Rome for the Holy Year of 1900. While expressing gladness at the piety of the pilgrims, Leo admitted that his pontificate had been "difficult and full of anxiety." Born in 1810, one year after Pius VII was kidnapped by Napoleon, Leo had witnessed the most turbulent century of the papal office since the Avignon captivity of the fourteenth century. During his lifetime, a Pope was kidnapped, three archbishops of Paris were murdered, and half of the Prussian hierarchy was imprisoned by Bismarck for refusing to accept state control over the Church. The Jubilee Years of 1800 and 1850 were canceled altogether because of civil unrest and revolution, and the Jubilee of 1875 was reduced in scope after Pius IX declared himself a "prisoner in the Vatican." After his own election, Leo would never set foot outside the Vatican.

Above all, Leo was painfully aware that he was the first Pope since the eighth century to inherit no papal lands. The last papal warship, the *Immaculate Conception*, anchored at Toulon in the south of France, was sold for lack of a papal harbor. The Pope not only lacked firepower, he had no effective political constituency in Italy. The 1868 papal decree *Non Expedit* forbade Italian Catholics from participating in parliamentary elections. In Rome, the new Italian government confiscated monastic and religious properties, deconsecrated the Colosseum, and made clergy subject to military conscription. At Leo's election in 1878, the civil authorities would not provide security, so he was unable to give the traditional *urbi et orbi* address from the balcony of St. Peter. He contemplated fleeing Rome after the funeral

Russell Hittinger *is the Warren Professor of Catholic Studies and Research Professor of Law at the University of Tulsa.*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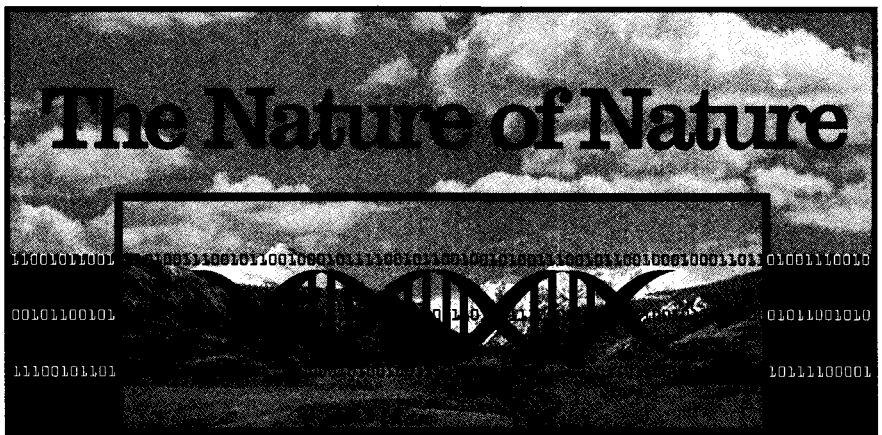
cortege of Pius IX was attacked by a mob wishing to throw the corpse into the Tiber.

PROFESSOR OWEN CHADWICK'S *A History of the Popes, 1830-1914*, is a superb account of the papacy between the French Revolution and the Great War. His study is comprehensive, lucid, and fair. This was a period marked by the notorious *Syllabus of Errors* (1864) and its condemnation of the proposition that "the Roman Pontiff can, and ought to, reconcile himself and come to terms with progress, liberalism, and modern civilization." Chadwick, however, does not treat these decades as a papal "dark age." Instead, he tells the history on its own terms. In so doing, he shows how the papacy emerged from these times spiritually and institutionally stronger than it had been in centuries, as well as how the papacy as we know it today began to be formed.

Chadwick's history covers four pontificates. Gregory XVI (1831-46) was by all accounts an ugly but jolly Camaldolese theologian-monk who brought to the job excellent intellectual and spiritual credentials. He took the name Gregory in honor of Gregory VII, the great monastic Pope of the eleventh century. Unfortunately for Gregory, he was not a Hildebrand, and the ruling powers beyond the Alps had no intention of replaying Canossa. He would be the last Pope to die a temporal monarch.

His successor, Pius IX (1846-1878), the liberal reformer turned intransigent, enjoyed the longest pontificate in the history of the Church. Chadwick's portrait of "Pio Nono," warts and all, is quite good, especially his account of the *Syllabus of Errors*, which makes the controversy intelligible to a contemporary reader. Pius shot from the lip, and his quondam table talk quickly circulated around the world by virtue of a new international press. Interestingly, the most memorable sentence of the *Syllabus*—the condemnation of the proposition that the Pope ought to reconcile himself to modern civilization—was written by Cardinal Bilio (Pius never bothered to check the final draft). Chadwick contends that this approachable and all-too-human pontiff abandoned the role of the austere prince of Rome for a new kind of papacy: personal, charismatic, and close to the people.

LEO XIII (1878-1903), elected at age sixty-eight, was supposed to be a transitional Pope, but he would



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enjoy a twenty-five year pontificate and write some eighty-five encyclicals. His model was Innocent III (1198-1216), who had made perhaps the most expansive claims for the papacy as a sacerdotal-royal office. (Leo had Innocent's remains moved from Perugia to the Lateran, and was interred next to him in 1903.) Yet Leo was the first Pope to understand the international mission of the papacy in modern terms.

Leo's successor, Pius X (1903-1914), dedicated himself to a renewal of piety and of religious life, as well as a reform of canon law. He encouraged frequent reception of the Eucharist and lowered the age for the first communion of children. The laity were urged not simply to observe the Mass, but to share in the sacrament. Pius X wanted Gregorian chant made accessible to the people. Editions of Gregorian melodies were printed, as were missals with vernacular translations of the Mass. As Chadwick notes, "These acts of Pius X amounted to a revolution in worshiping practices."

The overriding issue of the period, testing the mettle of each of the Popes, was the relationship between church and state. At the time, the issue appeared insoluble. For a millennium, the Roman See had ruled lands in Italy—the *patrimonium Petri.* By the time of the revolutions in the early nineteenth century, these states included not only the territories adjacent to Rome, but also the so-called Legations across the north of Italy. Geography, if nothing else, guaranteed that Rome would lose its states: the northern tier of the Legations stood at the doorsteps of France and Austria, and thus were vulnerable to foreign invasion, while the traditional territories around Rome cut the peninsula in two, thwarting the popular hope for national unification. Yet ancient tradition and a need for revenues dictated maintaining sovereignty over the states—voluntarily abandoning them was, in fact, unthinkable. At the same time, the price paid for keeping them was that the prestige of the papacy was reduced to that of a third-rate temporal power, with no army to speak of and no administrative apparatus with which to create a modern state on par with those beyond the Alps.

The question, as a critic of the era put it, was how the papacy could christen and tame the "savage lady" of democracy throughout Europe while ruling its own states in the fashion of an eighth-century monarch. Gregory XVI and especially Pius IX, who at first was moderately favorable to the stirrings of Italian nationalism, tried to have it both ways. "This incompatibility," Chadwick notes, "was the chief problem of the papacy and the Church for the next hundred years." The states were lost to the papacy in the old-fashioned way: Italian nationalists took them by force of arms, including finally the city of Rome in 1870. It was a blessing in disguise, but an atmosphere of belligerence would color the Italian problem well into the next century, until Mussolini and the 1929 Lateran Pacts.

The church-state problem, of course, was much larger than the events playing out in Italy. Despite the "Restoration" after the Congress of Vienna (1815), none of the European powers—least of all the papacy—was able to dampen the passions unleashed by the French Revolution. Though varying in intensity according to time and place, the results of democratic revolutions were predictable: church property confiscated, episcopal sees vacated, monks and nuns expelled, papal letters and communications with local churches suppressed, schools and seminaries either closed or brought under state

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supervision. There was much talk of liberalism, and of a "free church in a free state," to quote Conte Camillo Bensodi Cavour, the Piedmontese Prime Minister. The reality, however, was subordination of the Church to the state—"a slave church in a despotism," according to Rome.

At the international level, the Popes had to find answers to two questions. The first was practical: how to preserve the liberty, and even, it seemed, the existence, of the Church in the new regimes. The second was philosophical: what were these new regimes, and were they flawed all the way down to their first axioms?

The answer to the first question had been adumbrated a generation earlier by Pius VII and his brilliant Secretary of State Ercole Conslavi: Rome would use diplomacy and concordats to cut deals favorable to the Church country by country, as crises dictated. Thus the rise to prominence in the Roman Curia of the Department of Extraordinary Affairs, which would serve as the kitchen cabinet of the Popes for more than a century.

CHADWICK PUTS HIS finger on the most important legacy of this policy: from Lisbon to Krakow, Catholics became increasingly dependent upon and devoted to Roman authority. "It was a paradox," Chadwick admits. "The more authoritarian the Pope, the more he was able to help local churches and bishops against interference by their governments." In France, for example, the bishops had been arguing for two centuries that they, not Rome, were the arbiters of Catholicism in their country. When Napoleon signed the 1801 Concordat with Pius VII, he unwittingly annulled this policy of ecclesiastical Gallicanism. The pattern repeated itself in other countries where the local church also had no effective clout against the new regimes except through the leadership of Rome. Decades before Vatican I, the Church had become ultramontanist—operationally, emotionally, and increasingly in theory.

Chadwick carefully plots the course from these concordats to the First Vatican Council. He mounts no theological argument, pro or con, for the Council's declaration of infallible papal authority. But he shows why some pronouncement on the subject was unavoidable. In the first place, a council, by gathering together bishops from the besieged nations, would prove that "the Church had its own independent life apart from modern

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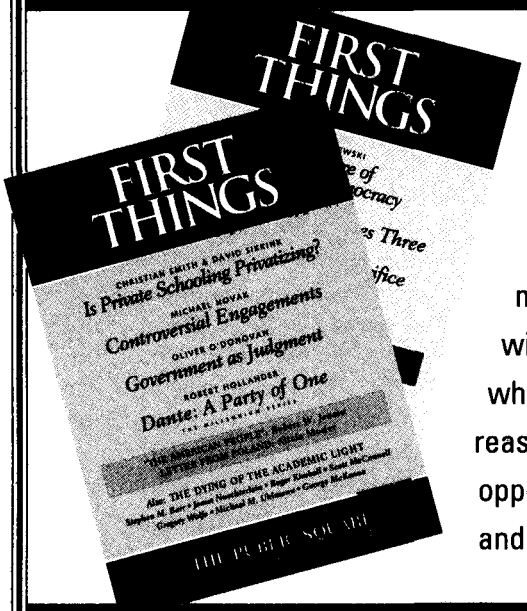

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states and what they decided in politics." It was necessary precisely in order to show that the Church was not merely a body of the ancien régime. Also, once assembled, how could the bishops avoid pronouncing on papal authority? The fortunes of the Church had come to depend upon papal leadership, and indeed upon a vision of the scope of papal jurisdiction long contested by Conciliarists and Gallicans. In this context, upholding the strongest claims of papal authority was progressive, not regressive. Not to have done so would have been to accept the argument of the modern states that the local churches were subordinate to the state, as in feudal times. By declaring first that the Pope's authority was derived from Christ rather than from a council or ecclesiastical plebiscite, and second that the Pope possessed an episcopal authority and jurisdiction over the whole Church, the Council denied to the new states any foothold in governance of the Church.

Although it will settle no theological controversy over Roman authority, Chadwick's account gives us good reason to eschew the work of journalist-historians such as John Cornwell. In *Hitler's Pope*, Cornwell argues that Vatican I and the subsequent Code of Canon Law destroyed "subsidiarity" and "secular pluralism" in the Church. Instead of "webs of local discretion" Catholics were given a "*führer-prinzip*." The fact of the matter is that the widely dispersed authority of feudalism was destroyed not by Rome but by the modern temporal powers, who either destroyed local authorities and traditions altogether or made them puppets of state policy.

The wisdom of the Council's theological remedy is debatable; but it is not debatable whether Vatican I helped to win the liberty and unity of the Church in relation to the states. Contemporary Catholic liberals often view these events in a curiously atavistic way, imagining that it might have been possible to return to the status quo ante of political Christendom in which national traditions provided a buffer against Roman authority. On the eve of the twentieth century, however, those nations were already heading for their rendezvous in the trenches of World War I.

IN ADDITION TO the practical question of how to respond to the new states, there were also questions of a more theoretical nature, the most overarching being, Were these modern states fundamentally flawed? To

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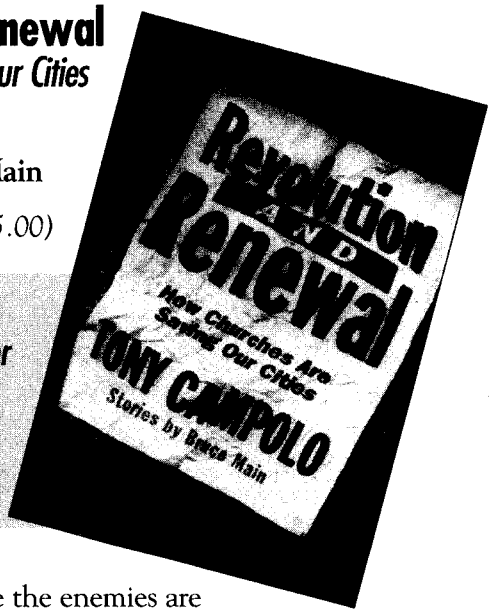

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appreciate why this was more than a merely rhetorical question it is necessary to put aside any temptation to consider European church-state relations from an American perspective. For us, the church-state issue was settled at the founding of the American Republic. Such was not true for the modern European states, which came into existence long before figuring out how to solve the problem of religion. It was not just the Vatican, but the states themselves, who were confused about the issue of whether the state bore sacral or implicit ecclesiastical power.

In fact, the states born and reborn in the revolutions refused to abandon the traditional privileges of temporal rule over the Church. Napoleon, for example, is said to have asked Pius VII whether he should play the role of Henry VIII or Charlemagne. Bourgeois monarch Louis Phillipe, after having deposed the Bourbons in 1830, wished to be called "Most Christian King." With the notable exception of Belgium, the modern European powers resorted, when it suited their purposes, to ancient rights of the *placet* and *exequatur*, according to which kings could accept or reject the enforcement of papal decrees and actions. As Chadwick points out, as late as the papal conclave of 1903, three states asserted the right to veto papal elections. Indeed, at that conclave, Franz Josef of Austria, via Cardinal Puzyna, Bishop of Krakow, exercised the veto to prevent the election of Cardinal Rampolla.

So, what were these states? For Pius IX and to a lesser extent for Leo XIII, they appeared to be perverse expressions of Christendom, for they claimed authority that once belonged to Christian princes even while despoiling the liberty of the Church and denying the theological grounds of such authority. Undoubtedly, none of these Popes was prepared to admit the legitimacy of a purely secular state. The key point is that, in their time, such states didn't exist. Rather, the states were hybrids, having the virtues of neither the sacral nor the purely secular. Leo, who had a brilliant power of philosophical abstraction, found it difficult to form a crisp picture of the situation for the good reason that he was looking at a moving target. The states could not decide whether they were a divine vicariate or an administrative apparatus for public order.

In writing more than two dozen encyclicals on civil governance, Leo at least began the process of sorting out the issues, a process that would bear fruit a century later. My only criticism of Chadwick's history is that he gives very short shrift to those Leonine encyclicals, which transcended the issues and policy disputes of the age. Instead, he prefers to observe how encyclicals were responses to particular political crises. The method works well for the encyclicals of three of the four Popes studied in this volume, but it does not befit Leo's work.

For the most part, however, Chadwick gets the story right. The papacy entered the twentieth century bruised, somewhat confused, but remarkably strong. It had won liberties that had been in dispute for a millennium, and more importantly, it achieved ecclesial unity—as it turned out, just in the nick of time. A few days before Pius X's death in 1914, Europe set off on a fifty-year program of spiritual and military suicide. Moreover, Chadwick is surely correct that the loss of the papal states was a blessing. The "rise in the Pope's authority as a churchman," he concludes, "was connected with the collapse of his authority as a politician." Despite his admiration for Constantine and for Innocent III, Pope Leo intuitively understood that the mission of the modern papacy was not to rule but rather to teach the nations.

BRIEFLY NOTED

James Joyce. By Edna O'Brien. *Viking/Penguin. 179 pp. $19.95.*

This entry in the Penguin Lives series of brief biographies is a peculiar one: it's best described as a kind of midrash on Richard Ellmann's magisterial, 900-page-long life of Joyce (first published in 1959, revised in 1983). Edna O'Brien is herself a gifted, if dark-visioned, novelist, whose oft-expressed reverence for Joyce would seem to make her an ideal candidate for this project. Unfortunately, her conception of her task clearly did not include the writing of a straightforward story. She is allusive, meditative, and sometimes provocative, but these are not necessarily the cardinal

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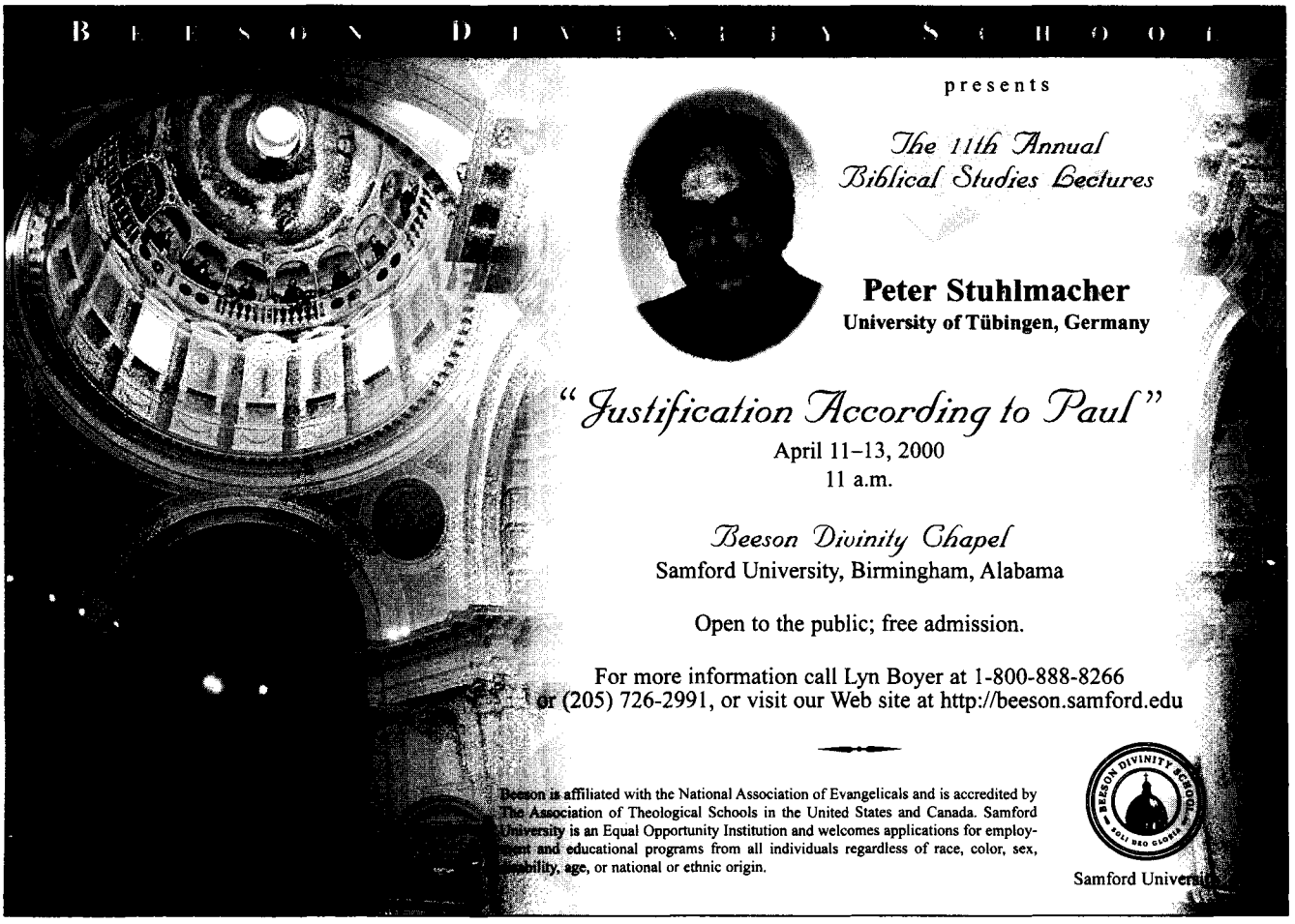
virtues of biographical narrative. On at least three occasions O'Brien makes a first mention of people in terms that suggest we should know them well—and indeed, if we have read Ellmann's book we will perhaps remember who "the solicitous Aunt Josephine" is; but if we haven't we'll be thumbing through the pages previous to this reference, wondering how we missed the (as it turns out nonexistent) passage in which we were given her full name, her exact relation to Joyce, and the reasons to call her "solicitous." Similarly, we hear in one chapter of Joyce's brother Stanislaus moving in with "Jim" and his family—but the Joyces are several pages into their next residence before the reader discovers that Stanislaus has been left behind. Joyce's notorious sexual obsessions, recorded in letters to his wife, get clinical attention here, but seem to deprive O'Brien of stylistic control: "Their hectic copulations had to be relived in order to further their rabid desires and to substantiate his leap in literature." (Say what?) O'Brien seems less interested in Joyce's equally obsessive relationship to the Roman Catholic Church, which he loathed with a pathological hatred but whose doctrines and liturgies shaped his imagination utterly. Only near the end, in chapters about the linguistic carnival of *Finnegans Wake* and the tragic madness of Joyce's beloved daughter Lucia does O'Brien find a satisfying narrative stride. This book is a disappointment, not least because the world could use a sound brief biography of this brilliant, perverse, and in many ways simpleminded man, whose mastery of the English language is exceeded only by Shakespeare's.

— Alan Jacobs

FOR THE TIME BEING. By ANNIE DILLARD. *Knopf. 205 pp. $22.*

Annie Dillard's writing is a valuable attempt to cut us loose from a complacent acceptance of life's enigmas. In *For The Time Being*, Dillard tries to shed light on two perennial questions: What gives human life value? And how can God be all-powerful and all-good, yet allow evil? She presents these questions forcefully; what escapes her grasp is a convincing answer. Searching for the purpose of life, she describes Teilhard de Chardin's experience as a stretcher-bearer in World War I: "Action he loved. His ever increas-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ing belief that God calls people to build and divinize the world, to aid God in redemption, charged every living moment with meaning." A hint of an answer begins to emerge here, but it is quickly snuffed out by, of all things, Dillard's consternation at the overwhelming number of human beings who inhabit the planet. "Only some deeply grounded and paradoxical view of God can make sense of the notion that God knows and loves each of 5.9 billion of us." Her thoughts on the second question are no more conclusive, as the existence of evil only entangles the first question further. Throughout the book, she calls as witnesses to evil's reality some of humanity's most nefarious butchers. But in a theodicy devoid of considerations of freedom and original sin, Dillard must alienate God from man; there is no way, she believes, that divine omnipotence and love can mix with human suffering. So she eliminates the personal God and posits instead an impersonal deity who plays no active role in our lives. The source of all this confusion may be Dillard's apparent belief that life's mysteries must be taken on by naked reason, stripped of faith's aid. If, to use Pope John Paul II's image, faith and reason are two cooperating wings, faith for her is at best a wobbly appendage, one which she equates with "doubt"—"Doubt and dedication often go hand in hand"—and describes as "living in conscious and rededicated relationship to God." But what sort of a "conscious and rededicated relationship" can one have with an impersonal God? The vocabulary is Christian, but the content is missing. One might expect a convert to Catholicism like Dillard to find in Christ crucified and risen the overarching meaning she so desperately seeks, but as she herself appears to realize, her own response is unsatisfying and provisional. But in the absence of a superior light—only, one hopes, for the time being—it will have to do.

— Br. Andre LaSana

Justice Is Conflict. By Stuart Hampshire. *Princeton University Press. 98 pp. $18.95.*

If Aristotle saw politics as men deliberating about how best to live together, Stuart Hampshire thinks it ought just to be men deliberating. For if our deliberants appeal to some unified and harmonious conception of the good, they fall into the error of "monotheism" (he really means monism), which will inevitably lead to tyranny. Our political system ought simply to ensure the negation of evils, especially the evils brought about when the majority imposes its will on the minority, rather than the promotion of some imagined common good. This defense of "procedural justice" is, as Hampshire admits, Hobbesianism and Machiavellianism cleaned up for a liberal democracy, and it is the result of a lack of faith in human reason to know right and wrong. The sad consequence of this despairing antirationalism is the lowering of our aspirations for democratic politics. Politics, Hampshire suggests, is fundamentally about power, justice is at bottom conflict, and reason, to quote Hume, "both is, and ought to be, the slave of the passions." The question left unanswered is why we should bother to deliberate if we don't think deliberating about substantive questions can ever issue in agreement. Why isn't politics just the war of all against all? Because in democracies we happen to like our democratic institutions? But how did that come about, and how will we sustain it? Anyone who wants to grasp quickly the limitations of early modern political thought could hardly do better than these Tanner Lectures, delivered at Harvard, which inaugurate the series Princeton Monographs in Philosophy.

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—Mary Ann Glendon, Learned Hand Professor of Law, Harvard University

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Who Are We? Critical Reflections and Hopeful Possibilities. By Jean Bethke Elshtain. *Eerdmans. 132 pp. $20.*

Elshtain, a frequent contributor to these pages, reflects on literature, movies, and the stuff of everyday life, and does so unblinkingly. She understands the abyss and teaches us how to shudder, but she understands, too, the gift of grace that relentlessly proposes a better way—a better way to think and a better way to live. This is faith-filled cultural criticism of a high order. Beautifully written and warmly recommended.

Lourdes: Body and Spirit in the Secular Age. By Ruth Harris. *Viking. 474 pp. $34.95.*

A wonderful telling of a story filled with conflicts, confusions, and wonders beyond understanding. Readers familiar with Franz Werfel's *The Song of Bernadette* (both the book and the movie) and other popular tellings will welcome Ms. Harris' scholarly but marvelously readable account of the cultural, political, and religious dynamics that elevated a Marian apparition to a young, poverty-stricken, and sickly girl kneeling in a muddy grotto into a shrine that is visited by many millions each year. The author's handling of the reports of thousands of inexplicable cures, many of them subjected to the most skeptical scientific analysis, is admirably fair-minded, as is her subtle treatment of the complex streams of feminism that brought Lourdes to prominence. Her story mainly covers the time from the apparition in 1858 to the beginning of World War I, with only occasional references to subsequent developments. A bonus is Ms. Harris' introduction, with its very convincing debunking of current dogmas among academic historians that attempt to debunk the possibility of writing the kind of history at which she has succeeded with such painstaking panache. One of the wonders of the book is that, after she has learned all she has learned, she still calls herself a "secular Jew." *Lourdes* is a splendid achievement and strongly recommended.

The Barthian Revolt in Modern Theology: Theology Without Weapons. By Gary Dorrien. *Westminster/John Knox. 239 pp. $29.95 paper.*

This admirably lucid and learned book provides a useful chart of the storms and shoals of much of Protestant theology in the twentieth century. The "Barthian revolt" refers both to Karl Barth's challenge to nineteenth-century liberalism and to the many subsequent challenges to Barth. The author's treatment of the monumental battles in which Barth engaged with the likes of Emil Brunner and Rudolf Bultmann is commendably evenhanded. Dorrien, who teaches at Kalamazoo College, Michigan, is himself very much a liberal, and it is his central contention that Barth, for all his polemics against liberalism, continued much more than he realized the work of his liberal teacher Wilhelm Herrmann. This is the significance of the "theology without weapons" in his subtitle, which refers to an *autopistia* or faith that stands on its own without support from philosophy, natural theology, historical demonstration, or ecclesial authority. The upshot, according to Dorrien, is that Karl Barth is in fact a fellow-traveler with the anti-foundationalists of contemporary postmodernism. Given his argument, it is not surprising that Dorrien gives short shrift to students of Barth such as Wolfhart Pannenberg and Robert Jenson who inter-

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pret and react to his work with quite different intentions. Whether or not one finds Dorrien's thesis convincing, his book is an eminently accessible account of the arguments, conflicts, and personalities that largely shaped a century of Protestant theology that, divorced from ecclesial foundation and authority, sought to liberate itself also from the constrictions of Enlightenment rationalism and from the liberal vindication of religion by demonstrating its cultural utility—and to do so in a way that bears witness to the unqualified lordship of Christ. Highly recommended.

Karl Barth: Against Hegemony. By Timothy J. Gorringe. *Oxford University Press. 312 pp. $70 cloth, $19.95 paper.*

A volume in a series presenting the most notable theologians and theological movements in Christian history. As the subtitle suggests, this is a "rehabilitation" of Barth that asks us to overlook his political incorrectness on the usual scores (patriarchy, homosexuality, etc.) and accept him into the company of the good Protestant liberals against whom he contended all his life. The author, who teaches theology at the University of Exeter, gives us safe Barth, which is the one thing Barth never was.

The Common Things: Essays on Thomism and Education. Edited by Daniel McInerny. *American Maritain Association. 281 pp. $15.*

A rich collection of essays on the errors of contemporary education and the vibrant alternatives provided by the Thomistic synthesis. The book is especially timely given the continuing debate over *Ex Corde Ecclesiae*, a debate in which such levelheaded and encouraging considerations as these will be eminently useful.

Painting the Word: Christian Pictures and their Meanings. By John Drury. *Yale University Press. 220 pp. $25.*

An ambitious book that is magnificently successful. In its lavishly illustrated pages, Drury, who is Dean of Christ Church, Oxford, combines commentary that is both artistic criticism and devotional appreciation, and both of a high order, despite some off-the-wall theology. The price is modest for a book of this quality, which suggests itself as a gift and as a companion to keep and return to again and again.

Roman Catholicism in America. By Chester Gillis. *Columbia University Press. 365 pp. $35.*

A part of the "Columbia Contemporary American Religion Series." The author teaches theology and Catholic studies at Georgetown University and provides a reasonably balanced overview of the history and present state of Catholicism in the U.S., written from an intelligently liberal perspective.

The Emphatic Christian Center: Reforming Christian Political Practice. By Kyle A. Pasewark and Garrett E. Paul. *Abingdon. 320 pp. $29 paper.*

A potpourri of political philosophy, theology, and policy wonkery that asserts a "center" of conviction rather than compromise between liberals and conservatives. The great enemy is "rights talk" (Mary Ann Glendon) and among the greatest villains is Richard John Neuhaus, whom the authors, based on an eccentric reading of just one of his books (to judge by the copious notes reflecting their much reading, they seem never to have heard of this journal), accuse of simplistically promoting individualistic rights, relativism, and even fashionably postmodern nihilism. Pasewark and Paul understand themselves to be liberals in an Augustinian-Niebuhrian tradition, and their critique of the religious left, based upon broad if idiosyncratic reading, makes their book of interest to students of the state of theol-

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ogy and ethics in mainline/oldline Protestantism at the end of the twentieth century.

THE THOROUGHBRED COLT: IDENTITY AND MORAL WILL IN A SOUTHERN FAMILY. By CARYL JOHNSTON. *Buy Books on the web.com. 185 pp. $14.95 paper.*

This may be a sign of things to come, a book not only sold on the Internet but published there. It is the story of five generations of the family of General John Hartwell Cocke, an antislavery advocate and friend of Jefferson, and all very gracefully told. It is also a morally insightful commentary on the civil rights movement of the 1960s and what it meant for relations between blacks and whites in the South, with special attention to Birmingham, Alabama.

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THE HEART IS A LITTLE TO THE LEFT. By WILLIAM SLOANE COFFIN. *University Press of New England. 81 pp. $15.95.*

As chaplain at Yale and pastor of Riverside Church in New York, William Sloane Coffin was once a very major voice in the Protestant oldline when the Protestant oldline was a major voice. His heart and mind are very far to the left, and his talent for religio-political aphorisms is justly renowned.

FURTHERMORE! MEMORIES OF A PARISH PRIEST. By ANDREW M. GREELEY. *Forge. 303 pp. $24.95.*

Sociologist Andrew Greeley has over the years regularly referred to himself as "a loudmouth Irish priest," and being such has its charms, although they begin to wear thin when the priest in question gets to be seventy-two years old. A continuation of his earlier *Confessions of a Parish Priest* (which Father Greeley, in fact, has not been for decades), the present book is a sustained ventilation of his opinions and prejudices, sometimes raucous and good-humored, frequently mean-spirited when directed at those whom he thinks have crossed him, and they are legion. A book for hard-core members of the Greeley fan club.

SIN, DEATH, AND THE DEVIL. Edited by CARL E. BRAATEN and ROBERT W. JENSON. *Eerdmans. 136 pp. $15 paper.*

Papers delivered at a conference of the Center for Catholic and Evangelical Theology, of which the editors are the founders. Of particular interest is Jenson on why we can laugh at nihilism (because it is nothing), Richard John Neuhaus on why what John Paul II calls the gospel of life is, quite simply, the gospel, and Vigen Guroian on Eastern Orthodoxy's joy in the Resurrection. All in all, solid theology winsomely presented.

THE FAITH FACTOR IN FATHERHOOD: RENEWING THE SACRED VOCATION OF FATHERING. Edited by DON E. EBERLY. *Lexington. 331 pp. $26.95 paper.*

An important collection of essays and statements by scholars, activists, clergy, politicians, and others on what is wrong with fatherhood these days and what can be done about it. Eberly is head of the National Fatherhood Initiative. Foreword by the redoubtable David Blankenhorn of the Institute for American Values.

AN INVITATION TO JOY: SELECTIONS FROM THE WRITINGS AND SPEECHES OF HIS HOLINESS JOHN PAUL II. Edited and with commentary by GREG BURKE. *Simon & Schuster. 224 pp. $30.*

There could not be a more perfect title for this beautifully produced book, which combines a large array of photographs of the Pope from around the world (two hundred in all) with a generous selection of meditations from his writings and public statements. The book is organized around themes such as prayer, forgiveness, youth, human rights, vocation, and suffering and evil. In brief essays before each section, Greg Burke (*Time*'s Rome correspondent) emphasizes the depth and richness of the Pope's response to the human situation. But the main virtue of this book is its simple, awe-filled wonder at the joy of John Paul II, which is nothing less than the joy of the Lord to whom he has borne such courageous witness. An ideal gift for Easter and an excellent resource for this Jubilee year.

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THE PUBLIC SQUARE

A Continuing Survey of Religion and Public Life

Richard John Neuhaus

How We Got Here

So David Frum sends me his new book, with the inscription, "Hope you like this one better than the last." I definitely do. The last one was *Dead Right*, in which Mr. Frum contended that conservatism was making a big mistake by letting itself be distracted by the social and cultural issues when what really matters is economics. (I oversimplify, a little.) The new book is *How We Got Here: The Decade That Brought You Modern Life—for Better or Worse* (Basic, 418 pp., $25). It does not neglect economics (Frum is particularly effective in describing the cultural and moral impact of inflation), but the bulk of the book is devoted to the fads, ideas, movements, inspirations, and delusions that marked the 1970s as a decisive turning point in the way Americans live. It is a rollicking good read, as well as a catalogue of the people and crazes that shaped what Frum, following Auden's judgment of the 1930s, calls "a slum of a decade." Those of a certain age will frequently be prompted to think, "Ah yes, how could I have forgotten that?" Younger readers are in for a lively tour of what to them are "the olden days."

I'm not inclined to argue with Frum's claim that it was the seventies and not the sixties that most influenced the last of the twentieth century. This habit of "decadizing" history is mainly a book publishing gimmick. Books on the sixties have been done to death. In any event, the story of the seventies is in large part the working out of the unbounded liberationisms proclaimed by the avant garde of the sixties, and I'm not sure that David Frum would want to waste much time in disagreeing with that. Almost everything is here: divorce up, marriage down; the marginalizing of the urban underclass; mushrooming pop therapies centered on the great god Me; school busing and related schemes of the elite imposed upon their supposed inferiors; the rise of identity politics and the crash of the academy; feminism's liberation of men from sexual responsibility; the hucksters of environmental apocalypse; bilingualism and the non-assimilation of a flood of immigrants; "homophobia" and the role of gays as arbiters of high correctness; smoking as heresy against the cult of the healthy self; the collapse of confidence in institutions, and in politics itself. When your friends tell you that your view of the cultural, moral, and social depredations of recent decades is exaggerated, you can pull out *How We Got Here* and cite chapter and verse.

On religion, Frum tells the story in a manner familiar to readers of this journal: the demoralization and decline of the mainline/oldline, the growth of conservative evangelicalism, and so forth. I do wish he had not cited what he calls President Eisenhower's "deservedly famous statement": "A system of government like ours makes no sense unless founded on a firm faith in religion, and I don't care which it is." The statement is indeed famous but not deservedly so, since nobody has been able to document that Eisenhower ever said it. Among other complaints I have, Frum greatly underestimates the vitality of Catholicism in America, and his treatment of evangelicalism inclines to the indulgence of caricatures. He is undoubtedly right in saying that at the end of the seventies many people "hungered for religion's sweets, but rejected religion's discipline; wanted its help in trouble, but not the strictures that might have kept them out of trouble; expected its ecstasy, but rejected its ethics; demanded salvation, but rejected the harsh, antique dichotomy of right and wrong." Cotton Mather said much the same in 1725, and preachers will likely be saying it until Our Lord returns in glory. A difference in the seventies is that

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more of the country's religious leadership turned toward the marketing techniques of pandering to the "felt needs" of the spiritually debased. But that, too, has a long history. The treatment of religion, while devastatingly accurate on some scores, is not the strongest part of the book.

Despite everything, and contrary to the massive evidences of depredation that he musters, Frum wants to sound an upbeat note. Along the way there is even this: "The 1970s were America's low tide. Not since the Depression had the country been so wracked with woe. *Never*—not even during the Depression—had American pride and self-confidence plunged deeper. But the decade was also, paradoxically, in some ways America's finest hour. . . . For a short time [the American people] behaved foolishly, and on one or two occasions, even disgracefully. Then they recouped. They rethought. They reinvented. They rediscovered in their own past the governing principles of their future. Out of the failure and trauma of the 1970s they emerged stronger, richer, and—if it is not overdramatic to say so—greater than ever." It is not overdramatic and it is not paradoxical; on the basis of the book's ample documentation, joined to the experience of those who were there then and are here now, it is, as David Frum might say, dead wrong.

In the actual conclusion of the book, Frum is somewhat more tempered. "Early twenty-first century America is a newly cautious society, not a remoralized one, and even that caution extends only so far." But the final sentence holds out the wan prospect that we are moving not backward but onward "away from the follies and triumphs of the 1970s and toward something new: new vices, new virtues, new sins—and new progress." Ah yes, progress. It is a very American book after all. The triggers of what went wrong in the seventies, according to Frum, were Vietnam, race, inflation, and, maybe, technology. Abortion—the single most fevered and volatile issue in our public life—receives but passing notice. That is the issue inseparable from a host of changes related to the redefining and redesigning of human life, and our moral responsibilities to one another. Some of those more grim prospects were explored by writers in the symposia in our January and March issues. David Frum shies away from digging so deep, lest he further undercut the shaky platform from which he issues what I expect he also recognizes is a limp half-cheer for progress.

But do I like the book better than the last one? Most definitely. In fact, I warmly recommend it for its frequently incisive cultural criticism, its spirited jeremiads, and its provision of detail and documentation about where we have been. Dr. Johnson was in large part right when he said that mankind has a greater need of being reminded than of being instructed. *How We Got Here* is an engaging and instructive reminder.

FT

JUDICIAL LINE-DRAWINGS

The editors of the *New York Times* are worried about the "muddle" over "just where the line is drawn on school-sponsored prayer." Judicial line-drawing in church-state questions is an exceedingly delicate business. A Texas public school district let students lead prayer over the public address system before high school football games. The *Times* draws a very bright line against that: "The practice plainly breaches the First Amendment's wall of separation between church and state, and the [Supreme Court] should not hesitate to say so." Earlier, the Fifth Circuit Court of Appeals drew a zigzag line, declaring prayers at football games unconstitutional while allowing them at commencement exercises because the latter are "singularly serious."

The editors favor a "principled" position that would compel conformity to the exclusion of all public prayer since such prayer creates "pressure for religious conformity." This is especially the case with student-led prayer, they say, "given how susceptible schoolchildren are to peer pressure and how seriously Texans take football." The Supreme Court has agreed to decide an appeal from the Fifth Circuit. It appears that that august body will have to determine whether Texans are more serious about commencement exercises than about football. The Fifth Circuit seems to take the position that, the more serious the occasion, the more allowance should be made for prayer, while the view of the *Times* is that nonserious prayer is less threatening.

As aforesaid, drawing these lines is a delicate business. It is not clear how the Supreme Court will be able to establish the facts of the case regarding the relative seriousness of Texans about football and commencements; and, if it succeeds in that, how its findings can be applied in a judicially principled way to the rest of the country. My impression, for instance, is that most New Yorkers are distinctly unserious about football. It's something that happens across the river in Jersey. Baseball is a different matter altogether. The conflicting

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constitutional doctrine here, if I understand the arguments, is that the Fifth Circuit principle would, because of their seriousness about the sport, allow New Yorkers to pray at baseball games, while the *Times*, precisely because of that same seriousness, would forbid it. If this sounds crazy, it is because it is crazy.

The editors say that "for mysterious reasons" the Supreme Court has agreed to review only that part of the Fifth Circuit ruling that disallowed prayer at football games, letting stand the allowance of prayer at commencements. My hunch is that there is nothing mysterious about the Court's reasons at all. The justices want to get out of the crazy business of drawing First Amendment lines that requires them to calibrate gradations of seriousness, sincerity, and hurt feelings about the expression of religion in public. Such factors cannot be rationally determined; the Constitution has not a word to say about them; and they are not remotely pertinent to the danger of the government unconstitutionally establishing a religion. The last fifty years of the Court's embroilment in the crazy business of drawing arbitrary lines, however, has everything to do with the infringement of the free exercise of religion, and free exercise is the entire purpose of the religion clause of the First Amendment.

If, as may be the case, the Court is finally ready to free itself from its excessive entanglement with the impossible task of monitoring the maddeningly complex dynamics of religion—and we will likely know whether it is by the end of this term—that is a most welcome development. It will leave Texans and everyone else free to be as serious as they want to be about their games, and those who object to an opening prayer will be free to dissent. During the prayer they might, for example, very ostentatiously bury their heads in the pages of the *New York Times*.

FT

At the Origins of the Culture War

One of the many contributions of Gertrude Himmelfarb's new book, *One Nation, Two Cultures* (Knopf), is to remind us that the phenomenon now called the culture wars is not all that new. She begins with this passage from Adam Smith's *The Wealth of Nations*, published in 1776:

> In every civilized society, in every society where the distinction of ranks has once been completely established, there have been always two different schemes or systems of morality current at the same time; of which the one may be called the strict or austere; the other the liberal, or, if you will, the loose system. The former is generally admired and revered by the common people; the latter is commonly more esteemed and adopted by what are called people of fashion.

I was recently reading Sam Tanenhaus' splendid biography, *Whittaker Chambers* (Random House), and was reminiscing over dinner about my own brief brush with a vestige of that tumultuous period. The Hiss-Chambers trials of 1949-1950 happened long before I came of political age, and I had no firm views on the contentions surrounding those events. Years later, however, in the mid-seventies, I was connected with an organization that routinely invited the then elderly Alger Hiss to its receptions and other occasions. He was something of a celebrity and seemed very much the gentleman. I never raised with him awkward questions about the past, but after one such occasion I asked an older colleague whether he thought Hiss was guilty of the crimes for which he had spent more than three years in federal prison. I was taken aback by the insouciance of the answer, "Oh, of course, he was a perjurer and Soviet spy." If that is the case, I naively asked, why on earth did we invite him to our affairs? The response came in the tones of a self-evident truth: "He insists he is innocent and to publicly disagree is to lend aid and comfort to McCarthyism." The reference, of course, was to Senator Joe McCarthy, who contributed so powerfully to the anti-anticommunism that was then regnant among "what are called people of fashion." What is a little perjury and treason, or even a lot of perjury and treason, among friends who agree on the important questions?

Later I would read Whittaker Chambers' *Witness* and come to reckon it one of the most important books of the century. There Chambers wrote:

> No feature of the Hiss case is more obvious, or more troubling as history, than the jagged fissure, which it did not so much open as reveal, between the plain men and women of the nation, and those who affected to act, think, and speak for them. It was, not invariably, but in general, the "best people" who were for Alger Hiss and who were prepared to go to any length for him. It was the enlightened and the powerful, the

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> clamorous proponents of the open mind and the common man, who snapped their minds shut in a pro-Hiss psychosis, of a kind which, in an individual patient, means the simple failure of the ability to distinguish between reality and unreality, and, in a nation, is a warning of the end.

On the basis of what is now known from the files of Soviet intelligence and other sources—all helpfully summarized by Tanenhaus—nobody but the willfully obtuse believes that Hiss was innocent. Among people of a certain age, however, and until quite recently, whether one sided with Hiss or Chambers divided the liberal *bien-pensant* from the ignorant peasantry. But the larger divide between the "strict" and the "loose" described by Adam Smith has not always been the case. Perhaps it has always been the case that many among the wealthy and aristocratic, along with the riffraff and criminal elements of society, have deemed themselves largely exempt from general moral norms. (This is what I have described as a culture caught between the overclass and the underclass, a locution subsequently picked up by the prolific Michael Lind and turned to quite different purposes.) In the modern period artists and intellectuals typically certify themselves to be such by their defiance of what they take to be established norms. Lionel Trilling called this the "adversary culture," and a decade and more ago the phenomenon was much discussed in terms of the "new knowledge class."

A Deeper Divide

Whittaker Chambers, among others, thought the phenomenon not so universal as did Smith nor so new as do more recent thinkers. As he wrote in *Witness* and in earlier days when he was a major voice in Henry Luce's empire of Time Inc., the phenomenon is to be traced to modernity's decision against God and the human soul. Chambers frequently wrote in the mode of the prophetic jeremiad, a mode that found a readier audience in the 1950s when figures such as Reinhold Neibuhr, Hannah Arendt, and even the Arthur Schlesinger, Jr. of *The Vital Center* also spoke in urgent tones about the crisis of the West. Less than twenty years later, the once lionized Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn would lose most of his audience in the West when he, like Chambers, traced the problem to the origins of modernity. For instance, in *A World Split Apart* (1978): "The mistake must be at the root, at the very foundation of thought in modern times. I refer to the prevailing Western view of the world which was born in the Renaissance and has found political expression since the Age of Enlightenment. It became the basis for political and social doctrine and could be called rationalistic humanism or humanistic autonomy. . . . The West has finally achieved the rights of man, and even to excess, but man's sense of responsibility to God and society has grown dimmer."

In the Hiss-Chambers period and up through the fall of the evil empire a decade ago, the divide between the two cultures of the one nation was, at least among intellectuals and the politically engaged, the divide between anticommunism and anti-anticommunism. Behind that and deeper than that, according to thinkers such as Chambers and Solzhenitsyn, is the chasm opened by modernity's divorce of the human project from its source and end in God. That chasm created the space for the growth of modernity's children, of which communism was perhaps the most destructive in its deformity. The future of the culture war in this nation will depend in large part upon whether we come to think that the American experiment is another deformed child of modernity—a view increasingly urged by some religious conservatives—or whether we engage its capacities to be corrected and renewed by the prophetic critique of the modernity of which it is undoubtedly, but by no means exclusively, the product. Put differently, the American experiment—as the word "experiment" suggests—is a work in progress. The culture war is about, inter alia, how the experiment is to be defined. It would be a great pity were conservative thinkers to join with "what are called people of fashion" in so defining it that it must be rejected by the morally and religiously serious. That, too, would be a kind of treason.

FT

CULTURAL BREAKTHROUGHS

A while back there was a story in the *Times* expressing puzzlement as to why there was so little interest this time around in the sale of the *Village Voice*. In years past, when the *Voice* changed hands there was much anxiety among the chattering classes about whether it would lose its edge as the liberal-left "conscience" of New York. But that was a long time ago, before the *Times* remade itself into the voice of the cultural and moral avant garde. It used to be that, on issues such as homosexuality, the role of the *Times* was to

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maintain standards or at least set limits (hence "All the news that's *fit* to print"), the *Voice* challenged those standards and limits, and then there were the really "alternative" publications that catered to the subcultural hard core. It was a well understood division of cultural labor. But in recent years the *Times* has veered to the left, displacing the *Voice* by making it superfluous. On every issue of consequence in the cultural wars, the *Times* has become ever more stridently partisan, and on none, except for "abortion rights," more shrilly so than gay liberation. Almost every week there are stories hailing new "firsts" in advancing the homosexual cause, and every week there are stories deploring the way conservatives are obsessed with the homosexual cause.

Here, for instance, is a story by Bernard Weinraub going on and on about the cultural significance of a man who won $500,000 on ABC's *Who Wants to Be a Millionaire* embracing his partner on camera. The story is spread over the front page of the Arts section. (On the same day, the 100,000 people in the annual march for life in Washington rated a small picture toward the bottom of page sixteen of the first section, and no story at all.) The audience of *Who Wants to Be a Millionaire* happily applauded, and Weinraub contrasts this with protests against homosexuality on television in decades past. This, we are instructed, is a big cultural and moral breakthrough testifying to the "acceptance" of gays and the decline of "homophobia." Never mind that on the program nobody, including host Regis Philbin, mentions gays or homosexuality. There is no reference to the nature of the relationship between these two guys. Unlike Mr. Weinraub, the people in the audience, except for some gay friends of the two, know nothing about it. The audience goes crazy with excitement when the guy wins $500,000. That's the point of the program. They applaud the guy who rushes up to hug his lucky friend, they applaud Mr. Philbin, they applaud themselves. That's the way it is with game shows. There is not the slightest hint of a heavy-duty "statement" being made. But Bernard Weinraub knows a cultural breakthrough when he sees one. (The *Times* headline reads, "'Millionaire' Quietly Breaks TV Barriers.")

The executive producer of the show offers a more sensible explanation of what is going on. "We treat everyone the same way, and there's never been an issue about people's personal relationships. . . . Whether somebody brings their college buddy or mother or sister or lover, we don't care. We don't care about ethnic things, we don't care about sexual things. We treat everybody the same. The show broadly reflects society." In other words, *Who Wants to Be a Millionaire* cares about people winning money. One could hardly want a more perfect statement of the cash nexus as the solvent of social distinctions.

There is one problem, however. It is not quite the case that the show "broadly reflects society." There are relatively few minority and female contestants. "This bothers me," says the producer. "I don't know what the reason is. There may be something about trivia and the amassing of knowledge of trivia that's essentially white and male." His speculation is exquisitely correct. Excluded are the possibilities that white males know more or are smarter or more assertive or quicker on their feet. No, they are more inclined to waste their time amassing knowledge of trivia. This, one is invited to infer, is a character flaw characteristic of white males. Of course, the point is not pressed, lest it end up at the conclusion that *Who Wants to Be a Millionaire* is premised upon exploiting and encouraging a weakness of character to which white males are peculiarly prone.

As of this writing, the editors of the *Times* have not followed up on Mr. Weinraub's story by proposing another of their favored causes. The unrepresentative nature of the program might be corrected by affirmative action. Women and minorities could be given easier questions, which is the approach the *Times* strongly supports when it comes to tests for government employment (and as is the practice with police and fire departments in New York and elsewhere). Or maybe a gender- and race-balancing handicap could be provided by wiring white males to a contraption that gives them a painful electrical shock when trying to answer a question. Mr. Weinraub notes the problem but does not address these possible solutions. It is enough that Mr. Philbin asked Mark to come up, that he bounded out of the audience and hugged his friend Rob, and that the people applauded. One big cultural breakthrough at a time.

It is the kind of story about a culture-shaking "first" that some years ago might have run in the *Village Voice*. No wonder nobody cares about who takes over the *Voice*, which is now given away free on the streets. The *Times*, a multibillion dollar enterprise, has taken over its market share, and that's what really matters. The phenomenon is explained by—to paraphrase Daniel Bell—the cultural depredations of capitalism. Aided, of course, by ideologically driven editors and writers whose larger purposes neatly coincide with serving as capitalist tools. It is what happens when the very good thing that is a market economy becomes the very bad thing that is a market society, when culture is taken captive to whatever can attract a paying crowd.

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"REAL EXISTING CHRISTIANITY" IN AMERICA

Resistance to the incorrigibility of Christian America takes many forms. Those who are taken with the idea of post-Christian America speak also of our having become a religiously pluralistic society, and lift up the presence of Islam and various Oriental religions in America. Asians are 2 to 3 percent of the American population, a little larger than the number of Jews. But Asians in the U.S.—notably Koreans, but also Chinese and Vietnamese—are very often Christians. Then there is Islam. A City University study concluded that there are about a million and a half Muslims, with about half of them being American-born blacks. The researchers noted that earlier and larger estimates assumed that anyone with a Middle Eastern name that was not Jewish must be Muslim. But they found that a large number of these people were in fact Christians—frequently Palestinian Christians or Chaldean Christians from Iraq. Muslim organizations, as is the pattern with immigrant groups seeking influence and recognition, claim a much larger figure, from six to eight million.

A reporter with a national newspaper tells me that his paper routinely refers to four million Muslims, conveniently splitting the difference and thus warding off angry protests from Muslim organizations. The Census Bureau, regrettably, does not ask about religion, but a generous estimate, based on what we know from other sources, is that 3 percent of the American population is Muslim or non-Christian Asian. Apart from the relatively small number of people who claim no religious identity whatever and the little over 2 percent who say they are Jewish, the rest of the American people are, in however muddled a fashion, Christian. (Allowing, for purposes of this discussion, that the somewhat less than 2 percent of the population that is Mormon is, as Mormons insist, Christian. See "Is Mormonism Christian?", March.) This is not what is usually meant by "a religiously pluralistic society." It is, for better and for worse, something very much like Christian America.

Immediately before the Second World War, T. S. Eliot published *The Idea of a Christian Society*. It is a problematic book, not least because of his incomprehension of the deep connections between Christianity and Judaism. Yet it is suggestive of the ways in which one may speak of a society being Christian. "A society has not ceased to be Christian," Eliot wrote, "until it has become positively something else. It is my contention that we have today a culture which is mainly negative, but which insofar as it is positive, is still Christian. I do not think that it can remain negative, because a negative culture has ceased to be efficient in a world where economic as well as spiritual forces are proving the efficiency of cultures which, even when pagan, are positive; and I believe the choice before us is between the formation of a new Christian culture and the acceptance of a pagan one. Both involve radical changes; but I believe that the majority of us, if we could be faced immediately with all the changes which will only be accomplished in several generations, would prefer Christianity."

America is Christian at least in this minimal sense that it has not become positively something else. We might prefer that it were otherwise. The idea that ours is a post-Christian society has its attractions. It goes a long way toward letting people who have a steep investment in Christianity off the hook. They can then blame the ills of society upon its having rejected Christianity. But that is too easy. It used to be that Marxists, faced with the sorry failures of socialism, would make a sharp distinction between socialist theory and "real existing socialism," thus rescuing the theory from the failure of its practice. In a similar way, the necessary embarrassment is that "real existing Christianity" is not an entirely edifying sight. But it should not be defined out of existence. There is, I believe, also a theological reason for facing up to the disconcerting facts. Of course, we can try to escape the embarrassment by positing Christianity as a Platonic ideal and the Christian people as an "invisible church," but that is hard to square with the stubbornly historical nature of the biblical story. Real existing Christianity is doctrine, worship, moral teaching, and traditions of holiness, but it is also and inescapably the people who claim to be Christian. Their claim should not be dismissed lightly. St. Paul reminds us that "no one can say 'Jesus is Lord' except by the Holy Spirit" (1 Corinthians 12:3).

We may wish it were otherwise, but those who say they are Christians *are* Christians in ways that we cannot easily deny. They may be "I just happen to be" Christians or they may be Christians by the deepest and most reflective conviction. We may dismiss many who say they are Christians as merely "cultural Christians," but there is nothing mere about culture. Christianity is not exhaustively, but it is unavoidably, the Christian people—a people as determinate as the Jewish people with whom they are providentially entangled in different understandings of what it means to be faithful to the one God of Israel—the God of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and Jesus. As Judaism

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is inseparable from Jews, Christianity is inseparable from Christians. The racial and ethnic factors are different; one is not born a Christian in the way one is born a Jew. There are unfaithful Christians as there are nonobservant Jews, but such people are still unfaithful *Christians* and nonobservant *Jews*. In either case, formal apostasy is possible, but it is rare. No doubt many are not seriously Jewish enough or seriously Christian enough to bother with apostasy. My limited point is that, no matter how marginally or ambiguously many may be related to it, there is a definite Christian people as there is a definite Jewish people, and the first is in strict biblical analogy with the second.

"Christian America" is all these Christians in America. It is more than that, but it is at least that. It is not sufficient to say that this is only a "sociological" way of speaking about Christianity, for the social is the historical, and history is, quite simply, social reality through time—the very stuff into which, as Christians believe, God became incarnate in Christ. If that is true, history has become a theological category. In this view, one thinks of historical things spiritually and of spiritual things historically. In His elect people, the Jews, the God of Israel has bound Himself to history, and that self-binding is fulfilled in the incarnate Messiah and his Body, the Church. Christian theology, if it really is *Christian* theology, cannot float above history; it is immersed in, entangled with, accountable to, embarrassingly particular historical realities, such as the Christian people of America.

The term "Christian America" speaks of a cultural reality that cannot be adequately captured by survey research about what people say they believe and do religiously. Polling data provide a snapshot, and many polls over a long period of time provide many snapshots. Just as we do not live with a snapshot or snapshots of a person but with the person himself, so we know a culture by living within it. "Culture"—both the word and the reality—is, of course, derived from "cult," and the American cult is Christian. To be sure, there are other cults, both in the religious sense of the term, and what are called cults surrounding rock stars, the obsession with physical health, or the consumerism of malls unlimited. But none of these alternative cults has produced a society that, in Eliot's terms, has become positively something else. On the contrary, those alternatives are routinely criticized by cultural standards and ideals that are unmistakably Christian. A culture is defined not so much by what people live up to as by the criteria they invoke in determining that they fail to be who they intend to be—and, they insist, who they "really" are.

"Christian America" is an embarrassment both to those who want to believe that ours is a secular society, and to those who hold to a normative understanding of Christianity that is not matched by the "real existing Christianity" of the American experience. An honest appraisal of our religious and cultural circumstance will not satisfy either party. The twentieth century produced a vast scholarly literature explaining why secularization is more or less inevitable. The basic assumption, which goes back to the eighteenth-century Enlightenment, is that, as people become more educated (read "enlightened"), religion will either wither away or be safely sealed off in the purely private sphere where it cannot intrude upon "the real world." At the beginning of the third millennium, it is obvious that things are not turning out quite the way the theorists had assumed they would. *(Next month: What has happened to secularization in theory and fact.)*

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While We're At It

■ Craig J. Rolwoods of Titusville, New Jersey, spotted this explanation from the U.S. Postal Service. It accompanies a commemorative postage stamp series on insects and spiders. "Insects have been around for about 350 million years. Today their numbers reign supreme. More than a million species are known, but scientists estimate that millions of species may remain undiscovered. At this very moment, there are some 200 million live insects for every human on Earth. Insects as a group have achieved something that has eluded humans—sustainable development. Insects are the primary consumers of plants, yet they do not merely exploit plants, they also pollinate them, thereby ensuring the plant's reproduction. Humans have yet to strike such a balance between use and conservation of nature. Spiders, in comparison, are a lesser group. Only about thirty thousand species are known. Most survive by feeding on insects, using venom to kill their prey." We may not be as good as insects, but at least we're superior to spiders.

■ We had some deservedly kind things to say about Father Anthony Ruff at St. John's Abbey in Minnesota and what he's trying to do with sacred music. Dr. Kurt Poterack, who edits *Sacred Music*, a quarterly published by the Church Music Association of America and advocating what it is not

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embarrassed to call a more "traditionalist" approach, thinks a little equal time is in order. In truth, there is an encouraging competition today among groups and publications that, whatever their differences, are united in trying to retrieve and renew the Catholic musical legacy in accord with the teaching of the Second Vatican Council. *Sacred Music* is available from 134 Christendom Drive, Front Royal, Virginia 22630. While we're at it, so to speak, there is also *Adoremus*, published by the Society for the Renewal of the Sacred Liturgy, P.O. Box 3286, St. Louis, Missouri 63130, and *Antiphon*, c/o Msgr. M. Francis Mannion, 331 East South Temple Street, Salt Lake City, Utah 84111.

■ A seriously Catholic friend whose line of work has him hanging out with equally serious evangelical Protestants has a problem. "I'm not very good," he says, "at giving the kind of formulaic 'personal testimony' that they seem to expect." I know what he means. For many years I've been responding to evangelical friends who want to know when I was born again or, as it is commonly put, when I became a Christian. "I don't remember it at all," I say, "but I know precisely the time and place. It was at 357 Miller St., Pembroke, Ontario, on Sunday, June 2, 1936, when twelve days after my birth I was born again in the sacrament of Holy Baptism." (I was baptized at home because the chicken pox was going around.) That usually elicits a wry smile, and then the question, "Yes, but when did you *really* become a Christian?" In sober truth, there have been not one but several moments in my life that would no doubt qualify as what most evangelicals mean by a conversion experience. In circumstances appropriate to the disclosure of intensely personal experiences, I have told others about these moments. And some day, in pathetically pale imitation of Augustine and other greats, I might write about them in detail. My public testimony, however, is not to my experience but to Christ. It is not upon my experience but upon Christ that I rest my confidence that I am a child of God. The same set of questions is addressed from a Calvinist viewpoint in a recent issue of that mordant publication, *Nicotine Theological Journal*. The article includes this from the 1902 *Heidelberg Catechism, Twentieth-Century Edition*: "Nor need you doubt your conversion, your change of heart, because you cannot tell the day when it took place, as many profess to do. It did not take place in a day, or you might tell it. It is the growth of years (Mark 4:26-28), and therefore all the more reliable. You cannot tell when you learned to walk, talk, think, and work. You do not know when you learned to love your earthly father, much less the heavenly." The editors add, "This is the Reformed doctrine of 'getting religion.' We get religion, not in bulk but little by little. Just as we get natural life and strength, so spiritual life and strength, day by day." Of course, some do get it in bulk, and with a bang. One thinks, for instance, of the zealot from Tarsus on his way to Damascus.

■ John L. (Jack) Swan was a piece of work. Friends and foes agreed on that, and he had plenty of both. He was called a "community relations consultant," but that doesn't come near to suggesting the half of it. He believed in the capacity of people for self-government, and worked quietly, relentlessly, and effectively against those who don't. In 1977, working with only $11,000, he organized the campaign in which 60 percent of the voters of New York rejected the Equal Rights Amendment. He devised the strategy that twelve times defeated the "gay rights" bill in this city. He was crucially important in overturning the infamous Children of the Rainbow Curriculum in New York's public schools (remember *Heather Has Two Mommies?*). In addition to everything else, he orchestrated the publication of the forty-six-volume *Collected Works of G. K. Chesterton*, published by Ignatius Press. He was always a gentleman. His friend George Marlin recalls a time when Jack was trying to do the Lord's work with the legislature in Albany. A reporter wagged his finger at Jack's nose and declared, "I know you're orchestrating this session, and I am going to interview you." Jack smiled his choirboy smile and calmly replied, "I do not grant interviews to the *New York Times*." When Jack died just short of his seventy-first birthday, Cardinal O'Connor said, "Jack was a scandal to the modern world and I thank God for that." Another friend, Donald Barr, a distinguished educator, was inspired to undertake what he says is his first attempt at poetry in ten years. I think it gets the man just right:

Life was his trade and Innocence his care.
He fought in silence in the dreadful strife.
His fingers, like Commandments, straight and bare,
He spread between the infant and the knife.
And the bath-house bravoes; the unfaithful priests;
The milkless Liliths of a Second Fall;
The artificers of decay; the beasts
In the forest of our nerves—he fought them all.

We loved to see him, leaning on his cane
And smiling slowly, coming from the field:
Smiling his answer to his bodily pain,
To loss, to hope deferred, to truth concealed;
Smiling in answer to the shrieking guile,
Ultimate victory in his slow smile.

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■ Michael McManus is a syndicated columnist and founder of Marriage Savers, an ecumenical program that has had significant impact in reducing the incidence of divorce. A recent column begins with the words, "Confession time." His confession is that he left the Catholic Church and became a Protestant "in part because I did not believe in the Catholic Church's position on birth control." At the time, he believed the line about the dangers of a population explosion. Rather than joining legions of Catholic dissenters from Paul VI's encyclical *Humanae Vitae*, he writes, "I thought it more honest to be a Protestant." Now he recognizes that Paul VI was right, and that his prophetic words about the consequences of contraception have been vindicated many times over. McManus notes that "evangelical Protestants are reconsidering their once solid support of contraception." The column does not say whether he is considering a return to the fold of the Catholic Church.

■ Now in the "whatever happened to" category is the once prominent German Protestant theologian Jürgen Moltmann. His *Theology of Hope* made a considerable splash in 1967 when a school of theologians known by that title, including the distinguished Wolfhart Pannenberg, was stirring widespread interest. Moltmann's *The Crucified God* in 1974 also received deserved praise, although mixed with criticism for his cavalier dismissal of aspects of the tradition of Christian orthodoxy. Now he has completed his five-volume "messianic theology" with *The Coming of God: Christian Eschatology* (Fortress), a book that is something of a curiosity piece. The overall thesis is that God created Heaven and Earth in order to dwell upon Earth as His home. Rather than our leaving the world to be with God, the Christian hope, according to Moltmann, is God's utopian transformation of the world. Short of that happy prospect, the whole world is divided into the murderers and the murdered, with America and Americans being the chief murderers, since they are the bearers of the modernity that is at war with God's purposes. Reviewing the book in *Pro Ecclesia*, Randall Zachman of Notre Dame says that Moltmann's claim is that "American society murders everything it gets its hands on: women, children, the Third World, and the natural world itself." Moltmann writes, "If the whole world were 'America,' the whole world would already have been destroyed." American capitalism is the Beast from the abyss described in Revelation, threatening the entire world "with its open sewer of unemployment and homelessness, hunger and nakedness, despair and death." Zachman describes the book as an extended "antimodern frenzy." Zachman observes, however, that there is finally something very modern, and very American, about Moltmann's position. "Nothing could be more in accord with the spirit of the modern era, and more in accord with the traditional view of the sin which destroys us, than Moltmann's vision of an eternal life, given to everyone [including the murderers] by divine necessity, for which we need to sacrifice nothing, and which leads us to affirm unconditionally our life in this world." For all the sounds of radicalized frenzy, it would seem that the message is pretty much what is to be found in innumerable books of feel-good spirituality: I'm okay, you're okay, and don't worry about salvation; it's a done deal.

■ The way in which some Catholics have internalized anti-Catholic stereotypes never ceases to amaze. Father James Heft, Chancellor of the University of Dayton and prominent opponent of the bishops' efforts to implement *Ex Corde Ecclesiae*, writes in the *Chronicle of Higher Education* that the proposal that teachers of Catholic theology should be recognized as such by the bishops "runs the risk of diminishing academe's already shaky confidence in the compatibility of Catholicism and serious intellectual work." Oh dear. In view of the Catholic intellectual tradition and the innumerable Catholics who are distinguished in every field of scholarship, those who even hint at such an incompatibility should not be pandered to but clearly labeled as the bigots they are. The most durable anti-Catholic canard is that there is a tension or conflict between being authentically Catholic and authentically American. Heft writes: "Pope John Paul II's apostolic statement on higher education says that Catholic colleges and universities are *ex corde ecclesiae*—from the heart of the Church. In biblical thought, the image of the heart combines the capacities of a believer both to think and to love. Catholic colleges and universities are also *ex corde patriae*—from the heart of the nation. . . . Learning how to maintain that duality without division requires vision, humility, and courage." Paul Blanshard (*American Freedom and Catholic Power*) would agree. What requires vision, humility, and courage is to enrich the pluralism of American intellectual and academic life with colleges and universities that are, without apology or embarrassment, Catholic. The real embarrassment is Catholic educators, hat in hand, poignantly eager to be accepted by their presumed academic betters.

■ Two high school students who are otherwise well qualified are denied membership in the National Honor Society (NHS) because they are unmarried

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and pregnant. They sue, and the ACLU takes up their case. The NHS has a "character" clause for membership, but its lawyer says, "Becoming pregnant is not a sign of immorality." A federal judge grants an injunction against the NHS. This is hardly a matter for a court to decide, but it is a matter that lends itself to civil debate. Of course becoming pregnant is not immoral, but one assumes the students became so as a consequence of sexual intercourse outside marriage, which, put to democratic deliberation and decision, would likely be deemed immoral. At the same time, in an abortion culture they decided against getting rid of "the problem," which may also be a sign of character. So should the NHS admit them to membership? As I say, it is eminently arguable.

■ Richard Dawkins of Oxford University (*The Selfish Gene, Unweaving the Rainbow*) is about as straightforward an atheist as we have around these days, and he employs a lively style in smiting hip and thigh those whom he thinks indulge in sloppy thinking about religion and science. About some things he is quite right. For instance, he is agitated about *The Sacred Depths of Nature* by biologist Ursula Goodenough, which is sold as a religious book and is laced with prayers and devotional meditations. Rails Dawkins: "Yet, by the book's own account, Goodenough does not believe in any sort of supreme being, does not believe in any sort of life after death. By any normal understanding of the English language, she is no more religious than I am. She shares with other atheistic scientists a feeling of awe at the majesty of the universe and the intricate complexity of life. Indeed, the jacket copy for her book—the message that science does not 'point to an existence that is bleak, devoid of meaning, pointless,' but on the contrary 'can be a wellspring of solace and hope'—would have been equally suitable for my book, *Unweaving the Rainbow*, or Carl Sagan's *Pale Blue Dot.* If that is religion, then I am a deeply religious man. But it isn't. And I'm not. As far as I can tell, my 'atheistic' views are identical to Ursula's 'religious' ones. One of us is misusing the English language and I don't think it's me." Dawkins continues: "If God is a synonym for the deepest principles of physics, what word is left for a hypothetical being who answers prayers, intervenes to save cancer patients or helps evolution over difficult jumps, forgives sins or dies for them? If we are allowed to relabel scientific awe as a religious impulse, the case goes through on the nod. You have redefined science as religion, so it's hardly surprising if they turn out to 'converge.'" If there are good reasons for finding a Supreme Being more plausible than the proposition that there is a teapot orbiting the planet Pluto, says Dawkins, those reasons should be spelled out "because, if legitimate, they are proper scientific arguments that should be evaluated." It is the fashion for agnostics to say they are respectful of religion, but in the absence of real arguments, those who call themselves agnostic about religion should add that they are equally agnostic about orbiting teapots. Dawkins complains that some theologians and philosophers want to have it "both ways"—presenting religion as congruent with science when they are among intellectuals but still encouraging the religion business with its popular beliefs in miracles, answered prayers, and all the rest. "What is surprising," he writes, "is the readiness of liberal agnostics to go along with it, and their readiness to write off, as simplistic, insensitive extremists those of us with the temerity to blow the whistle." Dawkins is right about the proponents of a too facile "convergence" of Christianity and science, especially when convergence means that science gets the "what" questions of reason and evidence and theology gets the "why" questions of poetry and wonder. But he is dreadfully wrongheaded on a number of scores. There is no evidence that he has seriously engaged Christian thinkers who do present scientific arguments in support of their belief, never mind the thinkers who challenge his restrictive notion of what constitutes "proper scientific arguments." As for the gap between intellectuals and the believing hoi polloi, Christian theology provides what many of us think is a convincing account of why access to the most important truths is not limited to scientists, philosophers, or theologians. For all the charms of his polemic, Richard Dawkins as "whistle-blower" is simply the old-fashioned village atheist complaining that those who do not think the way he does are ignorant boobs. Historically and at present, honest searchers for truth are marked by intellectual curiosity and a generous measure of humility. Professor Dawkins, it seems, has long since stopped searching, having concluded that anything bearing the mark of "religion" is a scam, but not being able to let go of the subject. His "science" is an ideology that precludes consideration of what it cannot explain. With respect to miracles or the supernatural, his mind is made up. He refuses to be disturbed by evidence. Call it whistle blowing or call it a sustained rant, it contributes little to intelligent conversation.

■ In what he acknowledges as an "optimistic" reading of affairs, Ralph Braibanti of Duke University attempts to counter Samuel Huntington's "clash of civilizations" thesis with a fifty-five-page essay, *Islam and the West: Common Cause or Clash?*,

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published as an occasional paper by the Center for Muslim-Christian Understanding at Georgetown University. Drawing heavily on materials published in these pages, Braibanti suggests that the Catholic Church is uniquely situated to bring Muslims and Jews together, perhaps even in an interreligious Third Vatican Council, an idea that he admits may be "utopian." He also underscores differences between Islam and Catholicism, contending, for instance, that in Islam abortion is permissible up to forty days after conception "when an angel breathes into [the developing life] a soul." (Some scholars say four months rather than forty days.) Braibanti takes seriously the perception and reality of Islam as a terrorist threat, but asks, "Why is it that departures from scriptural ideals in the Muslim world are identified with Islam and similar transgressions in the non-Muslim world stand apart from their religious contexts?" It is likely a rhetorical question, for, as he knows, a more secularized West tends not to identify its actions as Christian or motivated by scriptural ideals. While it is not untouched by wishful thinking, *Islam and the West* is a thoughtful proposal of a possible future to be read alongside Huntington's sobering anticipation of intensified conflict.

■ One of the pleasures of the annual time at the family cottage up in Quebec is that we have there an old Eleventh Edition of the *Encylopaedia Britannica.* That's the *Britannica* before Mortimer Adler and the Chicago crowd turned it into the propaedia-micropaedia-macropaedia mishmash that is not content to supply information and opinion but presumes to provide a structure for how we ought to think. In the absence of a morning paper at the cottage to get the day off to a depressing start, I read *Britannica* articles, which makes for an annual refresher course in anything and everything. For instance, I read the twenty-nine page article on the Crusades, more accurately described as the Christian effort to reconquer the Holy Land and northern Africa four hundred years after the Islamic conquest. Launched in 1096, the Crusades, as ordinarily defined, lasted for about two hundred years and met with something less than mixed results. The *Britannica* article was written by Sir Ernest Barker, from 1927 to 1939 professor of history and politics at Cambridge. His vigorous conclusion is a case study in numerous ideas that today's thought police have criminalized. Sir Ernest writes: "When all is said, the Crusades remain a wonderful and perpetually astonishing act in the great drama of human life. They touched the summits of daring and devotion, if they also sank into the deep abysses of shame. Motives of self-interest may have lurked in them—otherworldly motives of buying salvation for a little price, or worldly motives of achieving riches and acquiring lands. Yet it would be treason to the majesty of man's incessant struggle toward an ideal good if one were to deny that in and through the Crusades men strove for righteousness' sake to extend the kingdom of God upon earth. Humanity is the richer for the memory of those millions of men who followed the way of the Holy Sepulcher in the sure and certain hope of an eternal reward. The ages were not dark in which Christianity could gather itself together in a common cause and carry the flag of its faith to the grave of its Redeemer; nor can we but give thanks for their memory." Herewith, for purposes of comparison, the limp academese of the concluding paragraph of the twelve-page article on the Crusades in the current *Britannica*: "It must be emphasized that the Crusades should not be viewed too exclusively in terms of cause and effect. If they were sometimes a factor contributing to changes in the West, so also were they affected by those changes. Rather, the Crusades and the Latin Kingdom should be considered as an integral part of the diversified culture of Europe in the Middle Ages." Thus endeth the lesson on the majesty of man's incessant struggle. Except for one more thing. I checked out a yet earlier imprint of the Eleventh Edition, from 1911, and there Ernest Barker (not yet knighted) is identified as teaching history at St. John's College, Oxford. It is the same article on the Crusades but for the last line. After saying we should give thanks for their memory, he added in 1911, "even if for us religion is of the spirit, and Jerusalem in the heart of every man who believes in Christ." Do you suppose that was edited out of later printings for being too overtly Christian, or did Sir Ernest doff his faith when he donned his knighthood, or what? Any information on this would be welcome.

■ Forget the articles in *What Is Enlightenment?*, a publication of the Impersonal Enlightenment Foundation dedicated to the "enlightenment of the individual and the expression of enlightenment in the world" as taught by Andrew Cohen. The best part of the magazine is the advertisements. Here you can find out how to purchase the *Pocket Guides to Practical Spirituality* and *The True Life of Jesus of Nazareth* (described as "the eye-witness account, taken from the actual parchment"). You can also hire the architect who sketches "individually channeled designs for homes" or the counselor who teaches people to "move beyond the limits they have placed on their creative expression." Or, if you'd like to branch out to other like-minded journals, you can

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find subscription information for *ReVision: A Journal of Consciousness and Transformation*, which explores the "fundamental questions of our times," which, it says, include nonmechanistic forms of science and archaeomythology. Some of the ads enlighten before you buy, such as one for a booklet from the Sixth Patriarch Zen Center, which advises that "Garlic has hot dry fire energy and is medicine for people with cold damp stomach energy." On the other hand, if you'd prefer a more rigorous academic training in these fields, you can apply to study at John F. Kennedy University for a Master of Arts in Consciousness Studies (courses in "Deep Ecology and Consciousness" and "Lucid Dreaming") or to Sophia Divinity School, seminary of the Catholic Apostolic Church of Antioch-Malabar Rite, which thus far boasts two hundred ordained clergy worldwide and freedom from canon and creed, since "theology has killed much of the church." Whatever else enlightenment really is, it is definitely entrepreneurial.

■ The papers regularly turn up Washington politicians quoting our friend William Bennett's counsel that "every saint has a past and every sinner has a future." As it happens, that is Oscar Wilde on "the only difference between the saint and the sinner" (*A Woman of No Importance*), and he was wrong about that too.

■ So what is the significance of "full communion"? If the Episcopal Church establishes it with the ELCA Lutherans (who have already given approval) it means Episcopalians will be able to invest in Lutheran Brotherhood and Aid Association for Lutherans. *Barron's*, the financial paper, notes that Episcopalians don't have anything like the insurance and financial operations of the Lutherans. "Now," says *Barron's*, "the question remains whether Episcopalians will vote for full communion. More important, will they buy load funds?" Episcopalians securing their worldly goods through the Lutheran connection does play against stereotypes.

■ The Anglicans of Sydney, Australia, have in their diocesan synod voted for allowing lay people to preside at the Eucharist. The step has been temporarily blocked in a courageous decision by Archbishop Harry Goodhew. The Archbishop understands, as his synod apparently does not, that such a change is a certain formula for (further?) schism within the Anglican communion. The downside is that Goodhew is scheduled for replacement in a year and his successor may be of a more "progressive" stripe. It's not the most important story on the world Christian scene, but it deserves attention.

■ "The Foundations of Academic Freedom." The very title goes against today's anti-foundationlist grain. It is one chapter in Michael Polanyi's *The Logic of Liberty*, first published in 1951 and now reissued by the Liberty Fund (256 pp., $16 cloth and $9 paper). Polanyi, best known for his remarkable book *Personal Knowledge*, makes a trenchant argument that freedom, including academic freedom, cannot stand apart from its foundation in truth. This from the conclusion of the chapter: "In other words, while a radical denial of absolute obligations cannot destroy the moral passions of man, it can render them homeless. The desire for justice and brotherhood can then no more confess itself for what it is, but will seek embodiment in some theory of salvation through violence. Thus we see arising those skeptical, hardboiled, allegedly scientific forms of fanaticism which are so characteristic of our modern age. The study of academic freedom which we have pursued may serve to show what is the decisive point in the issue of liberty. It consists in certain metaphysical assumptions without which freedom is logically untenable, and without the firm profession of which freedom can be upheld only in a state of suspended logic, which threatens to collapse at any moment and which in these searching and revolutionary times cannot fail to collapse before long. Man's rapidly increasing destructive powers will soon put the ideas of our time to a crucial test. We may be faced with the fact that only by resuming the great tradition which embodies faith in these realities can the continuance of the human race on earth, equipped with the powers of modern science, be made both possible and desirable." Modernity's homeless passions. It is a phrase to remember.

■ From the Book of Revelation: "A great sign appeared in the heavens: a woman clothed with the sun and with the moon at her feet, and on her head a crown of twelve stars." The flag of the European Union with its twelve stars was officially adopted on the feast of the Immaculate Conception, December 8, 1955, even though what was then the European Council did not have twelve members. Paul Levy, then the press secretary, explained at the time that twelve is "a figure of plenitude." It now turns out that the artist who designed the flag, Arsene Heitz, an octogenarian living in Strasbourg, has a fervent devotion to Mary and believes he heard a word from God to base the design on the traditional iconography of the Immaculate Conception. Maybe this, too, is part of the re-Christianization of Europe

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for which John Paul II urges us to pray?

■ Dennis Prager suggests in his newsletter that maybe some day historians will be able to explain the anti-smoking hysteria that took hold toward the end of the twentieth century, with the chief result of transferring, in the name of health concerns, enormous wealth to trial lawyers. Prager cites a parental guidance notice in the *Los Angeles Times* for the PG-13 film *Jakob the Liar*: "Robin Williams in touching, comic fable about man who makes up news stories to raise morale in Jewish ghetto. Dead bodies, deprivation, suicide; Nazis torture Jakob; characters smoke." There it is—"characters smoke" along with dead bodies, suicide, and Nazi torture. As in hysteria.

■ Roger Haight's *Jesus Symbol of God* (Orbis) is reviewed in *America* by Elizabeth Johnson of Fordham. She celebrates the author's postmodernist reconstruction of Christology, adding only that in a time of religious pluralism, "To say that Jesus is the symbol of God implies that he is this *for* Christians." Yes, and for everyone else, as is emphasized in the 1990 encyclical *Redemptoris Missio*, which clearly states that whoever is saved is saved only through Jesus Christ, whether they have heard of him or not. I recall reading somewhere another review of Haight which observed that he has nothing to say about Mary and opined that the reason may be that "Mother of the Symbol of God" doesn't sound quite right.

■ It's a clever title: "Who Was That Masked Composer?" The teaser for the article in the *Atlantic Monthly* by David Schiff reads, "Aaron Copland's politics, his emotions, and his sexuality lie concealed beneath his music—but not so deep that they can't be recovered." Apart from prurient interest, Why? He was a composer, not a politician, psychologist, or sexologist. If they are concealed, maybe he intended to conceal them. Except for factors of class and education, what is the difference in this case between the *Atlantic Monthly* and the *National Enquirer*?

■ A growing number of Jewish thinkers are insisting that "Holocaust consciousness" is not a sufficient foundation for being Jewish. This is poignantly expressed by Marc Ellis, who teaches Jewish Studies at Baylor University, in "Ending the Era of Auschwitz." Writing in the *Christian Century* he says, "As many Christians, in light of the Holocaust, have critiqued and abandoned Constantinian Christianity, a Christianity aligned with the state, Jewish leaders have adopted a version of Constantinianism under the rubric of Holocaust consciousness." What Ellis calls the remarkable development of Jewish power as a "global force" has been accompanied by a loss of "moral compass." The destination of the Jewish people "cannot be either Israel or America, two nation-states with their own agendas and self-interests," although most Jews have no choice but to live in the history of those nations. He concludes, "Both the Holocaust and the illusory promises of Israel and America are part of our history. We cannot find our way alone, but must do so with others who realize that the promises they have been handed are equally illusory." It is a grim conclusion. Whether the very different promises of Israel and America are illusory is an open question. But surely between Jews and Christians our way forward together is in obedience to the God of Israel whose promises do not fail, however unlike our way of understanding what that obedience entails. The way forward is not in shared disillusionment but in shared faith.

■ The aristocratic (at least in manner), wealthy (by actual count), and conservatively eccentric (by frequent demonstration) columnist Arianna Huffington raves about Jim Wallis' new book *Faith Works*. Her column, a blast at George W. Bush, is titled "Political Posturing and the Poor" and is an instance of political posturing about political posturing and the poor. The occasion is Bush's expression of justified skepticism regarding claims made about the number of hungry children in Texas. Without addressing the question in dispute, Ms. Huffington asserts that Bush is indifferent to the poor although claiming to be a Christian. She has learned from Wallis that "In the New Testament, the subject of poverty and the responsibilities of wealth is found in one out of every ten verses in the first three Gospels, and in one out of seven verses in the Gospel of Luke." Apparently she did not bother to check out those figures by reading the Gospels. She says that for dramatic effect Wallis in his preaching sometimes uses a Bible from which every reference to poverty has been cut out. The result: "The Bible is full of holes." Much like the agitprop practiced by Mr. Wallis over the years in support of almost every fever of the leftish mind. One need not indulge in fatuous verse-counting to know that the Bible has a great deal to say about the poor. Nor does it make more persuasive Ms. Huffington's conclusion that George W. should follow Al Gore's example in asking himself, "What would Jesus do?" Not being Jesus, I never ask myself that question. I do ask, "What would Jesus have me do?" I do feel rather certain that he would not have me—or Ms. Huffington, or Mr. Wallis—engage in manipulating the Bible in the

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service of political posturing about the poor.

■ J. F. Powers, author of, among a few great books, *Morte d'Urban*, died last year, and John Derbyshire remembers him in the *New Criterion*. Powers was cool toward most of the changes in the Church worked by the Second Vatican Council. He remarked in a 1988 interview, "There isn't anything the Church can do that it hasn't already done to disillusion me, but I still think it's *it*." *Requiescat in pace.*

■ If we are to believe Harold Meyerson, even a god that failed might be better than no god at all. He notes in the *Nation* that the left still rails against capitalism but is largely silent on the "values" question in public debates, although "it is hardly a stranger to issues such as the collapse of community and the dislocations of modernity and postmodernity." The left can "still plumb the void at the core of capitalism, yet it no longer proclaims the transcendent humanism of socialism." The possible reason for the silence of the left? "Entering a 'values' debate without a god of one's own is tricky business."

■ When George Roche III, President of Michigan's conservative Hillsdale College, was plausibly accused of gross sexual immorality, leading also to the suicide of his daughter-in-law, conservative publications such as the *Weekly Standard* and *National Review* immediately jumped on the story, preempting liberal taunts of "conservative hypocrisy." Behind the story and how it played out were deeper currents, according to Steven M. Hutchens, writing in the *Religion & Society Report*: "Conservatives repeat La Rochefoucauld's maxim *L'hypocrisie est un hommage que le vice rend à la vertu* (Hypocrisy is the homage that vice pays to virtue) within the broader context of a moral striving that is both good and necessary, while liberals use it to belittle this striving, particularly in matters of sexual virtue, the compromise of which is the almost invariable sacrament of initiation into this way of life and thought. For the liberal, the inability to achieve what conservatives approve is all too often reason to surrender to undisciplined appetites, urges, and desires they try so consistently to endorse as 'natural,' but which are known by the honest appraisal of bitter experience as tending to chaos. This moral striving, together with our fellow citizens, is the very thing that holds together the civil societies that history has shown to be so very fragile and ephemeral. However well or badly the Hillsdale trustees handled the fallout from the Roche affair, the fact remains that in dismissing a man whose moral reputation has become damaged beyond repair they have done the minimum necessary to hold together the institution for which they are responsible, while the failure of the Senate to do the same in the case of President Clinton is a reflection of the death wish that seems, in the end, to overtake every nation."

■ "Not every abortion foe is a single-issue, right-wing ideologue." That reassuring thought heads a story in the *National Catholic Reporter*, which discovered many liberals at the big pro-life march in Washington. Affirming the "seamless garment" metaphor, these people somehow manage to link their pro-life convictions with positions not associated with right-wing ideology. What next? The same issue of *NCR* has a truly singular take on the oppression of Catholics and other Christians under the Chinese regime. In a rude rejection of Rome's overtures for better relations, the regime recently directed the ordination of five new bishops. The headline in *NCR* is "China's ordinations may be traditional after all." The paper notes, correctly, that in centuries past governments sometimes decided, even against the Pope's wishes, who would be ordained bishops. The Chinese Communists, says *NCR*, are simply agreeing with the retired Archbishop of San Francisco, John Quinn, that alternatives are needed to "the present procedure for the appointment of bishops." Persecution in China? Nonsense. Beijing is part of the movement for progressive church reform.

■ We could all do with a touch more humor about ourselves. Note three little items scavenged from here and there. A priest-sociologist-novelist says on an early morning television talk show that the Church is too negative and should advance its message by accenting charm and charity. Promptly followed by his assertion that Republicans are "racists" and Catholics who vote Republican are in danger of committing "mortal sin." Charm and charity? Charm and charity? Item two: an editor of the Jesuit weekly *America* bridles at the observation by Francis Cardinal George of Chicago that "liberal Catholicism" is too prone to seek accommodation with the culture. The editor, who has long advocated almost every progressive accommodation coming down the pike, describes a meeting with his liberal Catholic friends. He says he looked around the room and didn't see anyone who matched the Cardinal's description. Nobody here but us chickens. Item three: writing in the *Nation*, another priest editor, also a Jesuit, deplores George W. Bush's public statements about his faith in Christ. He quotes at length what Bill Bradley has said about his own religion ("lapsed fundamentalism," the editor calls

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it) and concludes, "Ironic, isn't it, that the most religiously introspective and, in the biblical sense, prophetic candidate is the one who remains silent." Even more ironic, isn't it, that there is so much silence to quote. One might also note that Mr. Bradley undoubtedly knows that there is a limited political constituency for lapsed fundamentalism. But I started by suggesting we need more humor about ourselves. So why do I keep noticing such items when I tell myself that they are unworthy of notice? Probably because they keep intruding upon my natural reticence. Or maybe just because they are funny, and the funnier for being unintentionally so.

■ Clark Pinnock, a Canadian Baptist theologian, has been pushing "openness theology," an approach that is roiling passions and threatening divisions among evangelical Protestants. Like "process theology" among liberal Protestants, openness theology conceives of a God who is historically contingent, learning along with the rest of us, and changing His mind in the face of new circumstances. This, of course, against a God who is omniscient, immutable, and perfect. The editors of *Christianity Today* know that these are very old questions attended by a venerable history of reflection turning on an understanding of analogy. In the absence of direct knowledge of God, His revelation to us and our knowledge of Him is not univocal but analogical. Put too simply, orthodox Christianity insists that any tendency to suggest that God is the same kind of entity as any describable creature must be rejected, while the analogy of being (*analogia entis*) makes it possible to speak of God by reference to creaturely experience and common rules of logic. These are heavy-duty questions and I mention them only to second the wise advice of the editors of *CT* to both sides in the controversy: "Do not attempt to read the words of Scripture outside the context of twenty centuries of interpretation. The Holy Spirit has not been snoozing since he inspired the New Testament. Please read the Scriptures with the help of those who have gone before."

■ The *Kansas City Star* has published a series of articles alleging that Catholic priests are four times more likely than the general population to have AIDS. A Rome-based press agency, ZENIT, points out that only a self-selected 27 percent of priests responded to the *Star*'s survey, and that the appropriate comparison is with the adult male population, since few children have AIDS and only 20 percent of new AIDS patients are women. A corrected survey might lead to the conclusion that the rate of AIDS among priests is lower than among adult males in the population, and very much lower than among adult single males. That having been said, and the *Star*'s sensationalism notwithstanding, any incidence of sexually-contracted AIDS among priests reflects a grave and undeniable moral failure. An examination of the *Star*'s actual survey and the responses to it are in many respects encouraging. For instance, despite the self-selection of the respondents, which students of survey research say likely biased the results in the other direction, only a small percentage of priests favor a change in doctrine regarding homosexuality or dropping the requirement of celibacy. Yet the reality is undeniably sobering. Of priests dying with AIDS, typically contracted through homosexual acts twenty or more years ago, Ralph McInerny of Notre Dame University writes: "All this is an effect of the rebellion among academic theologians that has characterized the post-Vatican II era. The Second Vatican Council ended during the mid-1960s, the decade when secular culture went off the moral rails. In retrospect it is clear that many professional theologians of that time were urging the Church to sign on to the sexual revolution that secular society embraced. Well, the Church's teaching remained—and remains—unchanged and increasingly countercultural. But all around us now are the victims of this supposed liberation by dissent. They are perishing not because of the Church's doctrines on sexuality (which, had they been followed, might have saved their lives), but because a generation of theologians charged with teaching them those doctrines led them profoundly and tragically astray." (For a detailed and withering critique of the *Star* survey, check out the Center for Media and Public Affairs at www.newswatch.org.)

■ George Weigel, author of that magnificent biography of John Paul II, *Witness to Hope*, also writes a regular column for diocesan newspapers. A recent column took note of the unseemly bitterness among opponents of *Ex Corde Ecclesiae* after the bishops adopted an implementation plan by an overwhelming 223-31 vote. For instance, in a signed editorial, Father Thomas Reese, editor of *America*, warned against the prospect of "inquisitorial" proceedings, and suggested, among other things, that lawsuits are in order claiming that Catholic universities are now "pervasively sectarian" and therefore ineligible for government aid. Weigel writes: "Some of the country's finest constitutional lawyers flatly deny that that is the case. But even if aggressively anti-Catholic secularists waged such legal battles only to lose them, what is the editor of *America* doing by providing them rhetorical ammunition for their case? Does Fr. Reese relish the

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thought of an ACLU attorney brandishing the December 4, 1999 issue of *America* in court, citing its Jesuit editor's palpable concern that Catholic colleges and universities may become 'pervasively sectarian'?" The question, I take it, is not merely rhetorical.

■ The title on the cover of the *New York Times Magazine* is "Church and State: How the Wall Came Tumbling Down." On the inside it is the more clever "Is Nothing Secular?" The article by Jeffrey Rosen correctly notes the way in which jurisprudence is moving away from the "wall of separation" metaphor to concepts of "equal regard" and "nondiscrimination." This means equal regard for religious and nonreligious institutions, and an understanding that, in public funding, it is not permissible to discriminate against a program or institution simply because it is religious. All in all, this is a heartening development, and the people and arguments crucial to it are very familiar to the readers of this journal. Rosen writes: "Thirty years later, sects that used to compete over whose vision of revealed truth would triumph in the public square began to see value in one another's work. In an age when everyone is a hyphenated American, religious identity became just one more prefix in the pluralistic mix." Forget the pejorative use of the word sects; Rosen is referring to the fact that the "strict separationism" of the past was closely tied to anti-Catholicism among Protestants, and that has now dramatically changed, as witness efforts such as "Evangelicals and Catholics Together." Rosen is also astute in recognizing that Jewish organizations—which once acted on Leo Pfeffer's dogma that the more secular the society is, the better it is for Jews—are today challenged by other Jewish organizations and thinkers who recognize the dangers of the naked public square. Rosen's article is, all in all, an unusually competent summary of the current state of the church-state question. He underestimates how long and how damaging was the rule of "strict separationism," and he is still attached to the atavistic fear that there are "religious supremacists" who, as he puts it, want the state to do the church's work. He may also be too confident about how decisive is the turn in the thinking of the Supreme Court. A great deal depends on the three or four justices nominated by the next president. But he ends, rightly I think, on the note of agreement with Columbia University historian Alan Brinkley, who says of the new circumstance, "This is not a radical new intrusion of religion into public life. It's a loosening of rather recent boundaries that in the minds of many people might themselves be seen as a radical innovation." Just so. We have come a considerable distance, but certainly not far enough, from the militantly secular strict separationism that held intellectual and judicial sway when I published *The Naked Public Square* in 1984. While much remains to be done, it would be churlish not to admit one's gratification with what has been done, and with Jeffrey Rosen's essentially fair-minded telling of that story.

■ A while back I admitted to having a grudging respect for people who say they don't even have a television set in their homes—if only they weren't so smug about it. Joe Wall of Philadelphia writes that he is very smug about it indeed, and sends along this little article he did for a local newspaper, "A Matter of Choice." He begins by noting that, according to some reports, the "average" American spends a sixth of his life—"his most precious resource"—watching television, and then goes on to list what you get if you choose to watch and what you can do if you choose not to watch. His catalogue of what television offers is doleful, if somewhat familiar. But I much like his list of things to be done with the time saved by not watching television. "You can: Take a walk. Write a letter. Plant a flower. Read a book. Call up an old friend. Watch a child play. Say a Rosary. Wash the car. Go on a picnic. Day dream. Knit a sweater. Fly to Europe, Mexico, Pittsburgh, anywhere. Talk to your husband, your wife, your children. Go to Mass. Wash the windows. Picket an abortion clinic. Perform a kind act. Fix something broken. Enjoy a hobby. Visit a lonely old person. Paint a picture. Sing a song. Play with your dog. Sweep the sidewalk. Befriend a small child. Coach Little League, soccer, whatever. Catch up on your sleep. Smile at a baby. Do push-ups. Fall in love. Go to a play. Mow the lawn. Learn Spanish, German, Japanese, whatever. Write out your family history. Play cards with old friends. Take your wife (your husband) out to dinner. Walk through your neighborhood. Think. Compliment your wife, your husband. Learn to play the guitar, banjo, bagpipes, whatever. Go swimming. Embroider a quilt. Straighten out your photos. Get to know your neighbors. Plot a revolution. Clean out the cellar, the garage. Toss a ball back and forth with your son or daughter. Go skiing, sky-diving. Drive down old country roads. Plan a party. Thank your pastor. Memorize a poem, a song. Join a local civic group. Help your kids with their homework. Write your Congressman. Learn to do calligraphy. Gaze at the nighttime sky. Watch the sun set in the west." That is a very winsome list of things to do, and we might all ask ourselves when was the last time we did some of them. I suppose, however, that my respect is a little less grudging but grudging nonetheless. Watching very selectively as I do, I'm not yet ready to throw out

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the set. If Mr. Wall comes visiting, I might put it in the closet. Then we'll see who can out-smug whom. He has the advantage, to be sure, of coming by his smugness honestly.

■ "I always thought that I would have made a great archbishop in Salzburg during the time of Mozart," reflects Archbishop Rembert Weakland, who is a classical pianist. "But instead I'm the archbishop of Milwaukee in the time of rock 'n' roll. That's the way life turns out." No doubt there are many Catholics, and not only in Milwaukee, who share his wish that things had turned out differently. He goes on to say, "Many of us Catholics have a certain ambivalence, a love-hate relationship, with our church. You can see that if you watch your newspaper's letters to the editor. We are the only church that publicly criticizes itself in the newspaper." With due respect, there are a couple of things wrong with that. I don't believe for a moment that the Archbishop hates the Catholic Church, although, admittedly, he sometimes has an odd way of showing his love. The business about letters to the editor, on the other hand, reflects the lingering influence of the Catholic ghetto mentality. It may still be true in Milwaukee, but out there in the big world that is America all kinds of people write letters critical of their churches. Check out, for instance, letters about the Southern Baptist Convention in Memphis. It probably is true, however, that most other churches do not have bishops who regularly and publicly distance themselves from their church. Friends in Milwaukee tell me there is widespread agreement with the Archbishop that he does not deserve Milwaukee, and vice versa. Such harmony of feeling between a bishop and his people may be construed as an edifying spectacle.

■ There is an opening for a one-year internship with FT, beginning in June or September. Please send resume, reason for interest, and writing samples to the editorial office, Attention: James Nuechterlein.

■ You may not believe this, but some readers say they miss those gentle and ever so whimsical proddings to send us the names of people who are prospective subscribers. Admittedly, other readers complain about, as one put it, "that incessant begging." Please. It is not begging to suggest that you share what you have found. In any event, we will be happy to send a sample issue of this journal to people you think are likely subscribers. Please send names and addresses to First Things, 156 Fifth Avenue, Suite 400, New York, New York 10010 (or e-mail to subscriberservices@pma-inc.net). On the other hand, if they're ready to subscribe, call toll-free 1-800-783-4903.

■ It would be more funny than chilling if it were not the epigraph for a scholarly book dealing with medicine's changing ways of thinking about death (*The Definition of Death*, edited by Stuart Youngner et al., Johns Hopkins University Press). A boy at his first baseball game asks his father, "How can the umpires tell a ball from a strike?" The father says that after the game he can ask the three umpires. The first says, "I call them as I see them." The second says, "I call them as they are." The third steps back, stares at the boy, and says, "Son, they ain't nothing till I call them." On that little story hangs a brief history of moral philosophy.

Sources: On Supreme Court school-prayer case, *New York Times*, November 26, 1999. On TV show *Who Wants to Be a Millionaire* and gay man winning $500,000, *New York Times*, January 25, 2000.

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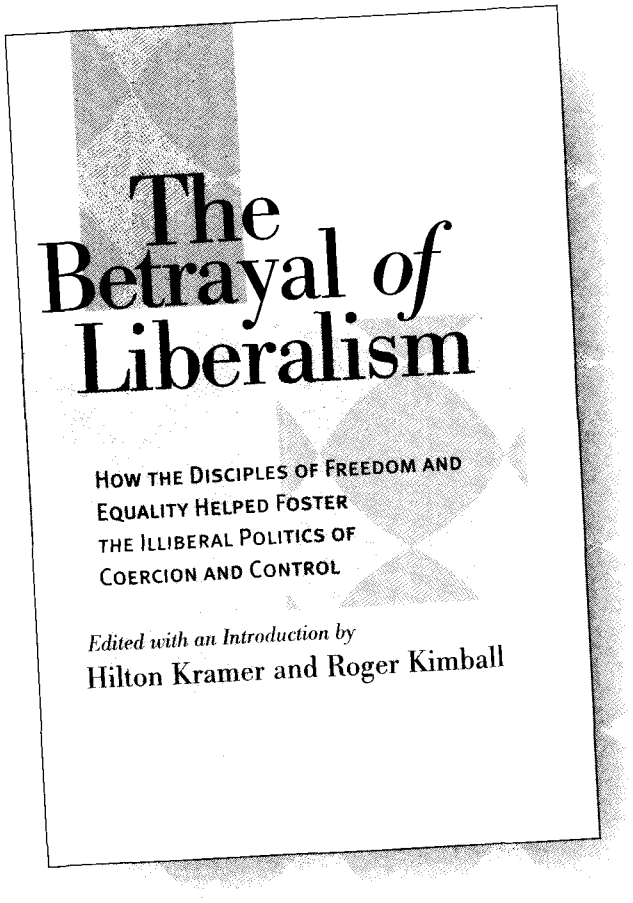
What liberalism means and what it stands for now

The Betrayal of Liberalism

Edited With an Introduction by Hilton Kramer and Roger Kimball


The Betrayal of Liberalism
How the Disciples of Freedom and Equality Helped Foster the Illiberal Politics of Coercion and Control
Edited with an Introduction by
Hilton Kramer and Roger Kimball

In these incisive essays which first appeared in the *New Criterion*, ten distinguished critics and observers examine the origins and prospects of liberalism, from its roots in thinkers such as Rousseau and Mill to its troubled legacy in 20th-century pursuits, and its compromising effects in the moral and intellectual life of our culture.

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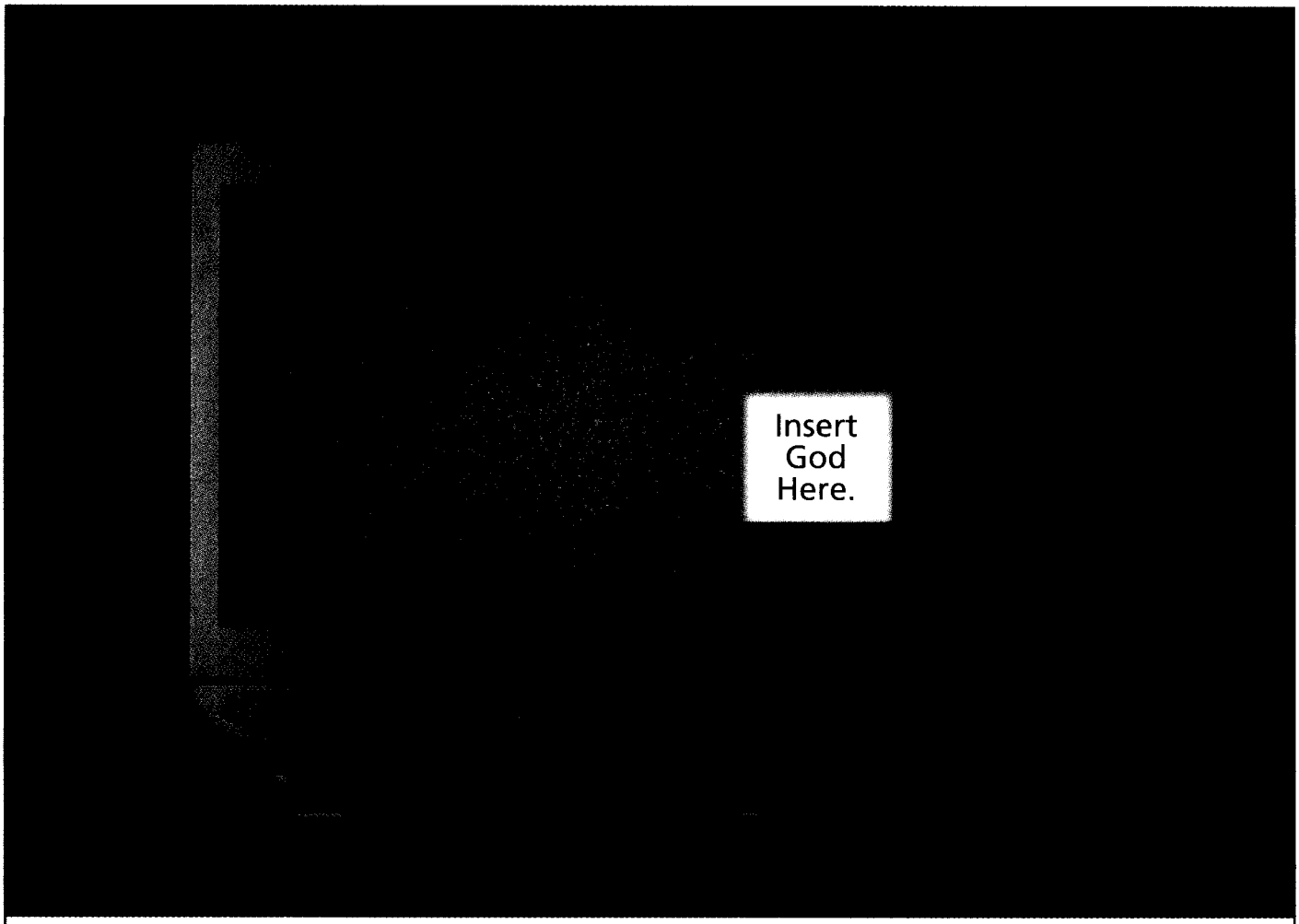

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